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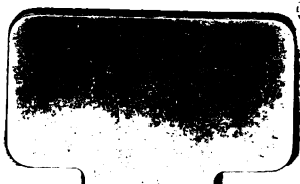
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BELLEROPHON



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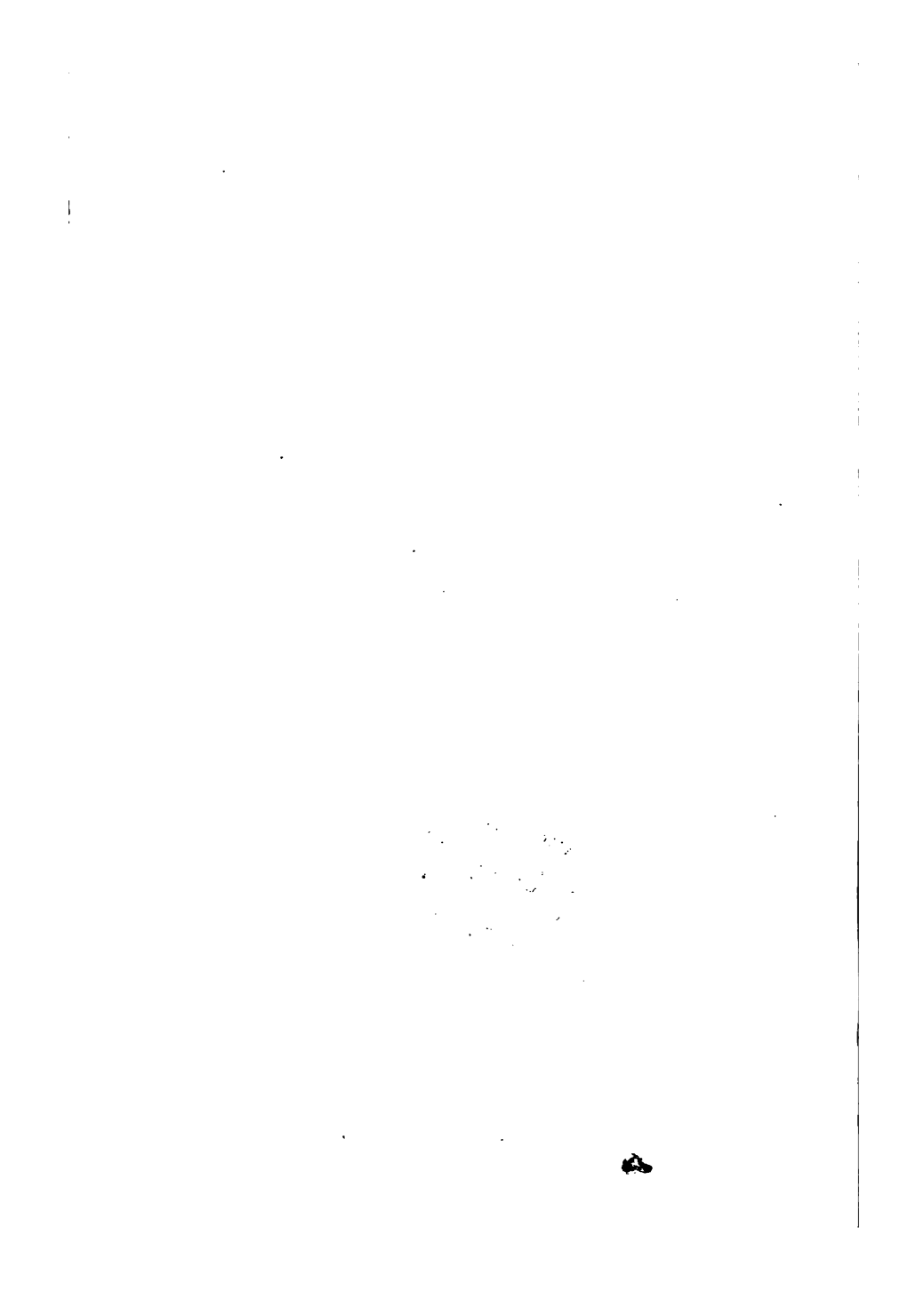
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BELLEROPHÔN



BELLEROPHON

BY

ARRAN AND ISLA LEIGH

"Caelum ipsa petimus stultitia"

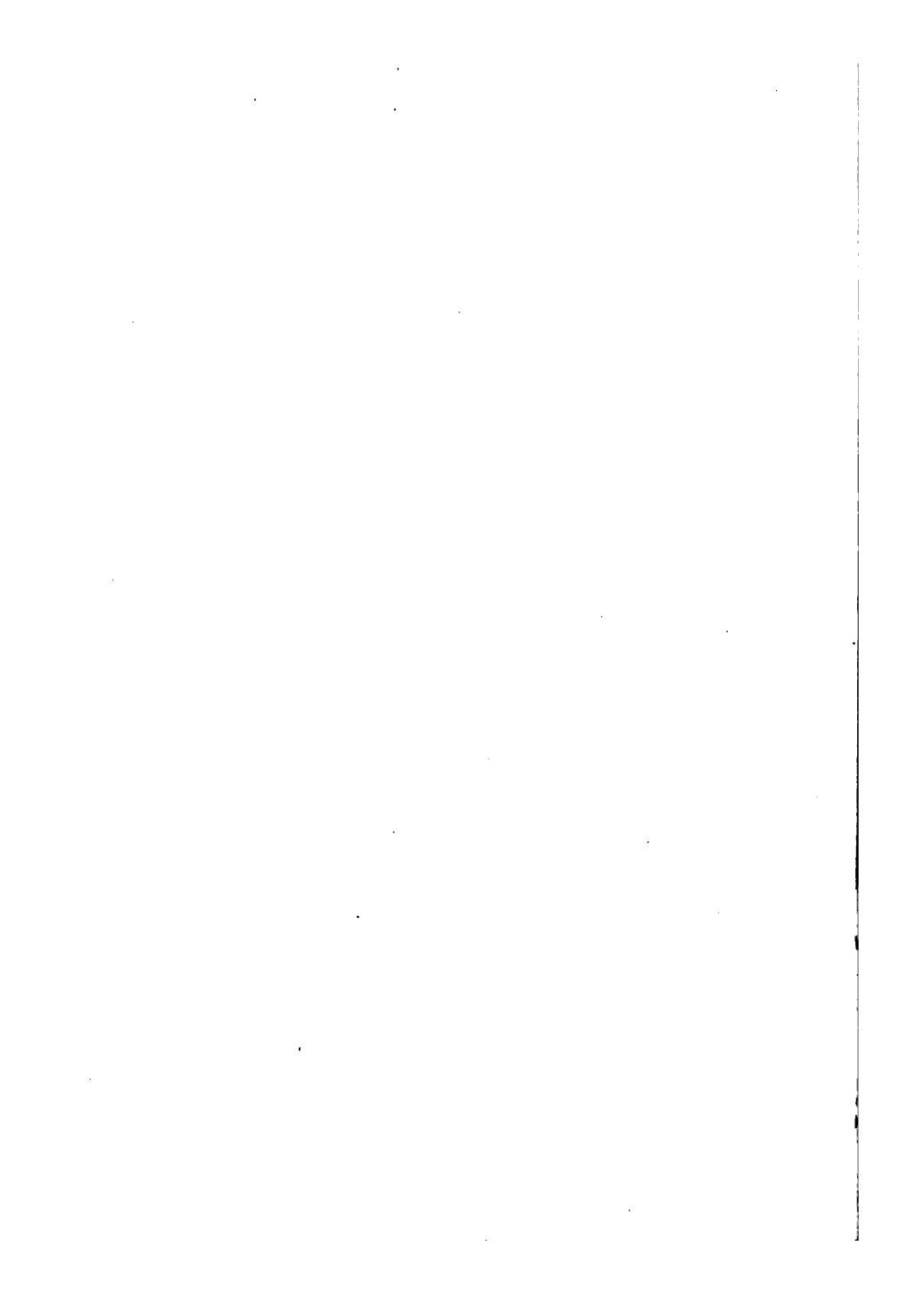


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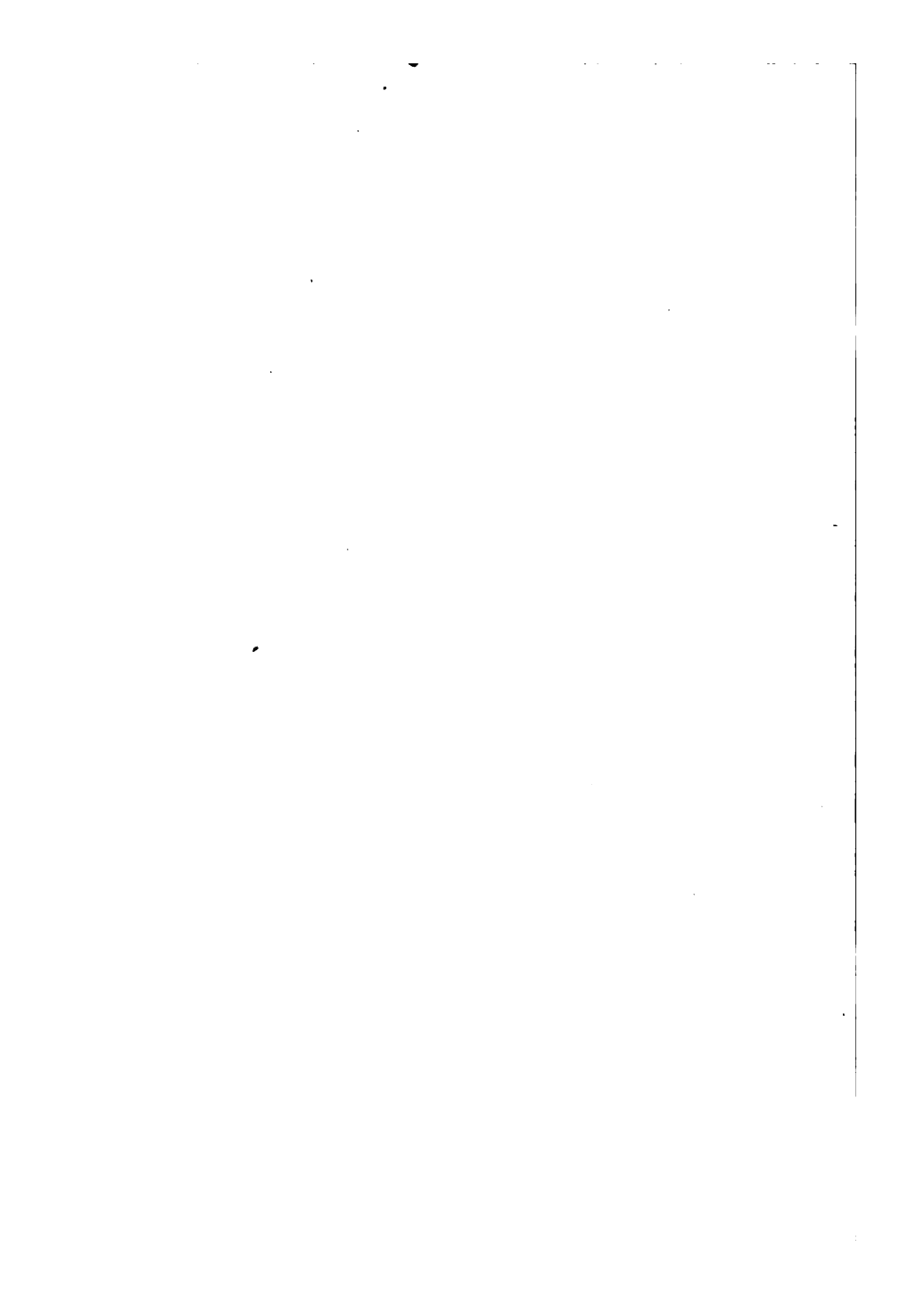
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BELLEROPHÔN.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.



BELLEROPHÔN.

PROITOS, *King of Argos.*

ANTEIA, *Queen of Argos.*

IOBATES, *King of Lykia.*

ERINNA, *Queen of Lykia.*

POLUBIOS, *a Corinthian Seer.*

ATHÊNÊ.

HERSÊ, }
PANDROSOS, } *Dew-maidens.*

EURUNONÊ, *a nymph.*

IPHIMEDÊ, *Anteia's maid.*

CHLÔRIS, }
ADRASTEIA, } *Erinna's maids.*
GORGÊ,

PHÊMÊ.

An Old Man.

A Maiden.

Chorus of Nymphs.

Guards.

BELLEROPHÔN.



ACT I.

ANTEIA.

SCENE I.—*A chamber in the palace of PROITOS, King of Argos. The QUEEN is discovered reclining on a couch, from which she half rises to detain BELLEROPHÔN, who pauses impatiently.*

ANTEIA.

Thou art so beautiful,
The very slaves about my house break off
Their toil, and in a wonder stare at thee ;
My women leave my half-wreathed hair unbound
If thou but pass my chamber-door ; the King
Looks for thee on the field, and in the chase,
And never in the banquet finds content
If thou fill not the cup. My lord hath taught
Me what is worshipful, and I have drunk
Thy sweet praise in, till I am sick for thee,

And crave thee, not as jewel for my crown,
Seer for my dreams, or juggler for my mirth ;
Nay, crave thee rather as the sun-parched lips
Crave drink. Slave, she that thirsteth is thy queen ;
Serve me, obey, at least compassionate.

BELLEROPHON.

Some thoughts there are so vile, speech bears their stain
Indelibly ; one cannot deal in words
With wickedness such as thou dreamest of.
Thyself thou hast polluted with thy dream,
Making thy beauty an embodied shame,
And my fond loyalty disgrace ;—as soon
Pity the carrion rotting in the sun
Quick of its own corruption. Thou art vile,
So that compassion sickens to disgust,
And the pure-nostrilled loathe thee. I must hence
To an untainted air.

ANTEIA.

Nay, blast me not
With thy keen purity ; its sworded breath
Murderously visits me. I am not vile
Who love thee for thy likeness to the gods.
Say, thou art born of one the gods loved well,
Who felt for high Olumpian visitant
All that I feel for thee, and sinned, to bear
A boy Zeus might not blush for ?

BELLEROPHÔN.

I am child

Of the Great Father, who inviolate
Keepeth all human bonds ; and I have drunk
Milk from a breast that Heaven alone could thrill :
Turn not my eyes back to that holy time,
Lest they, fresh filled with such white memories,
Blench more abhorrent from the thing they see.

ANTEIA.

Thou canst not thus abhor me ; I am fair ;
And haughtily as thou withhold'st thyself,
I have seen joy thou wert not master of
Darken thine eye and leap into thy cheek
When blissfully I bent o'er thee, as mild,
As luminously puissant as the moon
That pours her golden smile into the air
For lovers' lips to drink.

BELLEROPHÔN.

There are who balm

The common air, so that if one but breathe
Near them it is not common ; and to take
The air so fragranced as a gift from Heaven,
Drinking it but for life's sake, without pause
By the incensing flower-cup, is not sin.
Thou art most beautiful ; I am born a Greek,
And cannot look upon thee without change
Of current in my blood ; but now I know

Thou art not chastely beauteous like the moon,
But pestilential as a plague-sun's glare,
And my whole nature rises into curse
That gave thee loyal worship, in amaze
And horror at thy deep impiety ;
And to my nearer ken thou seemest one
Of the foul brood I am made strong to slay,
Loathsome, infectious.

ANTEIA.

As a monster then
Rid the world of me. Evermore thou dream'st
Of a world thoroughly cleansed of what defiles ;
Nor wilt thou fight with mortals, rather force
Chimaira, triple-headed, Lykian hag,
From her most noisome charming ; then on me,
Found so unnatural, malignant, foul,
Give practice to thy purifying sword
And save self-slaughter ! But, if Arès e'er
Plunged fiercelier into battle for the glow
Roused in his blood by Aphrodîté's charms,
I pray he will avenge me for the scorn
Thou heapest on his goddess, and make weak
The arm defiant of the sovereignty
It is his boast to homage. Hêrê's son,
Maim him, and mar !

BELLEROPHON.

Anteia, know'st thou not
That to Athênê I am wholly vowed ?

BELLEROPHÔN.

7

The god of war with strength infuriate
From the embraces of his white-armed queen
May leap to battle ; but Athênê's might
Is her virginity ; she girds my soul ;
And when I worship her, her limpid eyes
Are as clear skies at sundown ; from her depths
Of spotless radiance, steadfastness and calm
She gives her warriors, not the feverous wrath
That Arês, fitful, amorous, unrestrained,
Flushes his troops withal.

ANTEIA.

I tempt thee not ;
Yet, my most mighty hero, heaven-chaste,
Did not Athênê's dearest, Thetis' son,
Fill Hadês, angered for a ravished love ?
Where was the white-limbed Hellên of them all
But quivered at the sight of Paris' bride,
And fought for her, not for the ravaged house
Of Menelaos ? If thou canst not love,
The gods will hold thee criminal, accurst,
And, when thou diest, leave unpyred the heart
Heaven's torches could not kindle.

BELLEROPHÔN.

Unbeloved

I walk not, nor unloving ; did I so
I were condemned, degraded, desolate,
An unranked alien. Men build the walls,
But ere the glow of Hestia's sacred fire

The city lives not ; and this human form
Is but the shell of manhood, ere the flame
Of love illumine, consecrate, and guard.
And for the gods, they look not with such wrath
On rifled temple or polluted shrine,
As on one shamèd house. Thou growest pale ;
Let not my words foredoom thee ; but restrain. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*The same. The KING enters.*

ANTEIA.

Timely thou com'st, my lord, just spared the sight
Of my dishonour, whilst my trembling frame,
Disordered looks, tears, pallor, all protest
Escape from utmost peril. Him whom thou
Dost rate beyond suspicion hath been bold,—
Well may'st thou start—Bellerophôn the name
Thou must write swiftly 'mong the dead, or be
Scorned of all living.

PROITOS.

Nay, I met his eyes,
As he passed from thy chamber, and they had
Such awful purity, I felt reproach,
Like one who, wandering, all unwittingly
Startles the white deer of dread Artemis ;
Him will I never doubt.

ANTEIA.

Thou art a fool :
A thousand times I have repelled him, sworn
To tell thee of his wickedness ; but now
I am not safe in my own chamber-walls,
And must entreat thee, either prison him,
Or give me a fit guard.

PROITOS.

If he in aught
Hath dared to trouble thee, or doth offend,
I will dismiss him straight. I have indeed
Seen him about thy person, trusted oft
With message from myself ; and thou meseemed
Wert free and gracious to him, as a youth
Well favoured, emulous of fame, and proud
To merit a queen's praises. Make more clear
The crime, that I more justly may avenge.

ANTEIA.

I will not tell thee that which shouldst thou hear
Thou might'st confound me, helpless, innocent,
With his most monstrous purpose. I have dealt
With thee in wifely loyalty and love ;
And if thou murder not thy treacherous slave,
So light thou hold'st my woman's majesty,
I am released from my marriage-bond,
Nor will I trouble to keep free from soil
Honour my lord lets tarnish wittingly.
I will go pray my maids to guard me round,
Lest I again encounter—

PROITOS.

Have no fear ;
This day I will dismiss him to the Court
Of Lykia. Oft hath he importuned me
To set him on some venturous quest, and seeks
Strife with men-eating monsters. Lykia now
Is prey to the she-dragon, smoky-mouthed,
Her breath a scorching or a sickening stench,
So that who nears her faces fire and plague ;
Iobates most gladly will receive
From me a fine young stranger, covetous
Of death, through extreme daring. In my hand
I hold a letter, piteous in its plaint
Of desolated Lykia, and this
I will unfold to the presumptuous boy,
That, amorous, he may soon be surfeited
With the embraces of the female Coil.
To-day he shall set sail.

ANTEIA.

It pleases me,
When punishment is but the culprit's guilt
Writ large before his eyes. The Lykian She
Shall wreak on him the foulness that he fain
Had heaped upon my head. Quickly devise
His instant embarkation, that no more
He may afflict my sight. Farewell, my lord. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*A garden sloping to the sea. The QUEEN,
with IPHIMEDÊ and her other maidens.*

ANTEIA.

Iphimedê,

Thou mindest when at Lykia's Court how oft
My sire's young spouse—to me more sisterlike
Than motherly, she scarce outstripped my years—
Oft languished of a sickness none could name,
That much I noted, and still hoped to cure,
Till snatched a bride to Argos. Now I learn
Her sickness waxes sorer, I am bent,
Since young Bellerophôn sails thitherward,
And I am skilled in simples, to convey
To her some proffered balm. Therefore with speed,
Yet secretly that none take note of it,
Bid the Korinthian listen my commands.

[IPHIMEDÊ summons BELLEROPHÔN.

(*Aside*) Sister—not sister-rival ! this will breed
Hate in thee ; fellest hatred is as health
To the fine pangs of love. (*Aloud to BELLEROPHÔN,
who enters*) I know thy haste,
And stay thee but to yield for Lykia's queen
This gift into thine hands. It oft dispels
The languor she is prey to. Go, farewell ;
Thou hast been entertained at this Court
Less as a stranger than a foster-son,
Yet leav'st it smiling ; then, if I should weep,
I should provoke thy laughter—

BELLEROPHÔN.

Thy commands

I will obey. And for my swift remove
 To Lykia, I am grateful to the Queen,
 To whose desire haply my monarch bowed,
 Urging me slay Chimaira for the spoil
 He coveted, the mane and scaly coat
 Of the stripped Beastliness. Thou art most kind
 Thus secretly to plot for me—most wise,
 Anteia, and in part thou hast my thanks. [He retires.

SCENE IV.—*The seashore. A ship at anchor waiting for the tide.* BELLEROPHÔN *seated on a rock.*

BELLEROPHÔN.

The tide is rising that shall bear me straight
 To Lykia, to the desolated land,
 And joyous as the ripples round the keel
 The blood should throb to-day about my heart,
 Being god-born, well greavèd, and a Greek,
 At war with earth's deform Brutality—
 A thing goat-bearded, dragon-fanged, of breath
 That three-days'-festering bodies in the sun
 Would marvellously sweeten! Oh, to cleanse
 The air, men's thoughts, the slime-besmearèd fields,
 From the eruptive Filth. Thou briny breeze,

Blow fresh ! how simply it is born in me
 To worship what is lovely, and efface
 To the pyre-ashes of its corpse whate'er
 Soils and corrupts or the fair earth or man.
 Had I but knowledge of one human soul
 Unalterably pure, that were a dart
 That through Chimaira's scaly bucklered side
 Would pass direct as arrow through the air.
 Whence could such presence spring? Not from thy
 depths,
 Thou clear Cerulean, did the goddess rise
 Anteia could invoke ; if thy heaved waves
 Should clap their wings and spread themselves in flight,
 Methinks some glorious creature would uprear
 His billowy pinions feathered with the foam,
 With curled resplendent mane-ridge of tossed spray,
 Luminous neck, eyes flashing purple fire,
 And hoofs to paw the clouds imperially.
 Oh to bestride that wingèd wave, to sink
 In the mid-seas of heaven, then re-emerge
 And break in whelming whiteness on the lair
 Of the light-blinking hag ! Companionship
 I need with an imperishable strength ;
 Not hers, whose amorous praises made me faint
 For love—to be to some pure-hearted one
 What, with such feigned devotion, she professed
 I was to her ;—yet did she wholly feign ?
 The wistful passion in those darkening eyes,
 That hand so tender suppliant in its touch,
 The tremulous warm tresses she let sweep

Over my shoulder—transitory shower
Of thrilling radiance—witnessed for her truth.
She worshipped me ; and, spite of my disdain
For eyes, blue-veined hand, and shimmering tress,
I had a thousand kisses ; smote with lips
That craved a gentler labour, and until
With grosser passion she besmirched the glow
Of simple rapture in my herohood,
She opened vials in my soul that ne'er
I knew the odour of—sweet, sweet, how sweet !
Turned to a rankling venom now I know
The delicate enchantress seeks my death,
To fell Chimaira dooming me. Oh, how
Shall I endue my spirit for that strife
Who am not master of my baser self ?
Ye gods, defend my spirit's citadel
From this insidious foe, that impotent
Assails the gates : there is a secret path,—
Keep it, ye pure Invincible. I swear,
Abashed by this high summons to destroy
The devastating creature whom ye hate,
If this sharp trouble pressing at my heart
Obstruct my manhood from its perfect play,
That I will crush it as Amâzons crush
The hindering breast.

ACT II.

CHIMAIRA.

SCENE I.—*The Palace of Xanthos.* IOBATES,
BELLEROPHÔN.

IOBATES.

Fair youth, thine urgency of gait and speech
Hath prompted me to give thee audience
Ere the appointed hour, that speedily
Thou may'st unfreight thy over-cargoed soul,
I, not incurious of her costly wares,
Receive and store her precious merchandise
In royal sort : freely unfold thyself.

BELLEROPHÔN.

I ask no favour of thee, King, save leave
To look on thy fell foe, to travel straight,
Under due escort, to the vale where lies
That animated slough of filthy flesh,
Chimaira ; for the gods have chosen me
To execute their justice on her life.

IOBATES.

'Tis self-delusion's web, which, spider-like,
We spin from our own selves, that wraps thee round
With daring fancies ; many a pallid youth—
His wild eyes fevered with a sick desire—
Has been to me, and prayed for conduct straight
To snaky-limbed Echidna's dragon-child,
And then has failed in this his holy charge,
Or dropt a quivering morsel in the maw
Gorged with the flesh of heroes. Whence art thou ?

BELLEROPHÔN.

I came from Argos, sent by Proitos, and
Trust me by Heaven, nor call the consciousness
Of a divine appointment by the name
Of self-delusion : though I cannot prove
An embassy from the immortal gods,
My spirit bears its impress as the charge
Written on Helot's skin indelibly.

IOBATES.

Alas ! what god hath marked thee for his jest ?
Hath Arês, fearful lest his amorous queen
Should look on thee too fondly, fired thee thus
To desperate encounter ? Thou art mad.

BELLEROPHÔN.

Athênê, my great guardian, she who sprang
Full-armed, ripe-brained, a virgin majesty,

From the grand head that rules the universe,
 She of light-woven chlamus and vast shield
 Of snake-encinctured darkness, arms my soul,
 Fulfils my heart, endues my feebleness
 With her own mighty aegis, and pours down
 The clear light of her blessing on my brow.
 If I am true to the divinity
 That holds the helm of my frail nature's bark,
 The victory is mine.

IOBATES.

Too fast thy tongue
 Runs on the path of speech ; and many words
 Crowd round an action till they crush it down.

BELLEROPHÔN.

Nay, but my words are to my deed, O King,
 As many sacred heralds to some great
 On-marching leader.

IOBATES.

Thou art far too young,
 Smooth-lipped, love-worthy, thus to yield thyself
 To the bare daggers of Chimaira's jaw.
 Thine is but empty boasting, and fine talk
 That youth delights in.

BELLEROPHÔN (*aside*).

Oh, what bitterness
 When men esteem the kernelled nut a round

Ripe shell of emptiness ! They are but fools
Whose spirits are not divers in the depths
Of other souls. (*Aloud*) Most solemnly, O King,
Yea, even by the nameless nether gods,
I swear to quell Chimaira, if the sky
Still holds me in its favour. And desire
Toward this great deed is wilder than the thirst
Hot dipsas kindles. I *will* slay the beast !

IOBATES.

Thy words are fierce, even while thy brow is mild ;
Thy face is now a contradiction ; yea,
A riddle past my solving.

BELLEROPHON.

Brutal joy

In mere spilt blood is hateful to me, King.
To send to Death that which to Death belongs,
As the black dogs to black Persephonê
Are slain at midnight, is to me a joy
Sacred, intense. My goddess would despise
And turn from low ferocity, as oft
She turns from steam of impious sacrifice
Insulting the pure sky. Ferocity
Wastes holocausts on ever-hungry Death ;
Justice but leads the victim Heaven demands
Unto Death's altar, as I long to lead
Echidna's infamous offspring.

IORATES.

 All in time
Thou shalt ; now we would welcome royally
Our brave deliverer, with feast and song
And dances—tapestry of moving feet—
And crown him with brown oak-leaves, to proclaim
Sure victory. By Herakles, our maids
Will give thee hearty welcome, and be loth
To yield thee to the slimy bridal-bed
Of the she-monster.

BELLEROPHÔN.

 Oh, I do beseech
An instant guidance to the smoky vale.—
When longing's wave has reached the falling point
It needs must fall in action. Check me not.

IOBATES.

Stranger, no guides will face the flooded road ;
The rivers roll white anger down their stream ;
The valleys lay aside their peacefulness ;
The warrior forests clash their banded arms
Against the opposing wind ; the wrathful hills—

BELLEROPHÔN.

O King, the opposition of the clouds,
And winds, and rain-swelled rivers are to me,
Opposed to deadlier foe, but as the waves
To the great trireme they reluctant bear

On to the haven of the adverse fleet.
Besetting hindrances o'ercome are tides
That to the great achievement bear us on.

IOBATES.

All in good time. Learn patience, youth ! Thou hast
Some tablets in thine hand.

BELLEROPHÔN.

For thee : they are
From Proitos ; of their import naught I know.

IOBATES (*aside*).

These dreamers ! how they look away from earth
While their feet blindly stumble ! (*Aloud*) Give them me.
(*Reads*) Some private words that much concern our State,
And some slight mention of thee—slight, I mean,
Beside the other message, though most full
Of praise, and with thy worth engraved. Approach,
Bellerophôn, so thou art called, and as
A son I would receive, and father thee
Most royally. Come to my arms !

BELLEROPHÔN.

O King,
Believe me, help me !

IOBATES.

While the greeting wine

Warms not thy lips all words to me are pain.
Come to my arms, Bellerophôn.

BELLEROPHÔN (*aside*).

Cursed thought !

He is Anteia's father. Ye high powers,
Protect me ! All about the brows and lips
And languorous, large-irised eyes the lines
Of her grand guileful face. Now I perceive
The gods cleanse not the currents of the blood ;
Our veins are conduits of the poisoned stream
Of a polluted parentage ; and she—
How could she otherwise—

IOBATES.

• Bellerophôn,
Art thou oblivious of my presence here,
That thus thy lips speak secrets to themselves ?

BELLEROPHÔN.

Forgive ; I cannot always keep my thoughts
As shepherd in one fold——

IOBATES.

Come to the feast.

SCENE II.—*A room in the palace at Xanthos.* IOBATES,
ERINNA.

IOBATES.

He is a youth
Most dangerous ; and if he had not ta'en
The title of deliverer, so that all
The people crowd him, I would have him pitched
Prey to the hungry gullet.

ERINNA.

Thou hast well
Divined ; he has the people's wayward hearts,
And may not be disposed of privately.
Yet, to the vale pestiferous if thou
Send him, and he return in triumph, much
I tremble for our throne.

IOBATES.

So slight a boy !
No warrior ; yet I will confess I felt
As in the presence of an enemy
Of strange resources and uncertain strength,
Whom it were wise to circumvent, and rash
To under-reckon.

ERINNA.

If he did not hide

A villain's heart in his simplicity,
Would he have brought dishonour on the name
Of our fair daughter, doubtless half betrayed
By his sweet frankness? Do not trust the face
Almost a maiden's in its artlessness,
But think of him as Proitos found him.

IOBATES.

And

Has sent him hither for his chastisement.
If we deal not the tablet's doom, I fear
Argos will grow infuriate, and find
Means to avenge our slackness.

ERINNA.

I will write

To Proitos, though we seem to tease our prey
Half-hearted, he may trust our vigilance
It shall be mangled savagely. Meanwhile
Discourage the young hero; take him oft
To hunt with thee; the fairest of my maids
Shall cross him: he is weak and amorous,
And we may so debase him that the crowd
Will weary of him, sicken of its hope,
And we may find a favouring moment when
The craven may be yielded to its will
Surer of doom than if the sluggard beast
Should waken drowsily to cope with him.

IOBATES.

Thou hast a woman's cunning ; I resign
Our guest to his fair hostess. Only see
He charm thee not, as erst our child. That laugh
Rings with derision, yet take heed. Farewell. [*Exit.*]

ERINNA.

I will laugh loud, that only I can dare !
Laughter that is the raven's croak above
The festering corpse of innocent delight
May ring derisive ! Yet *he* charms me not—
The young Korinthian whom I pause to see
Pass through my palace, from his early bath
Returning, the pale sunlight in his hair.
He doth not charm me, though less wearisome
The midnight revel, now mine eye can rest
In secret moments, where he stands apart,
The faded vine-wreath laid aside, the calm
Of the cool night on his unthrobbing brow.
Say that I saw a cistus blotted deep
With blood I cherished, could I see the flower
In after summers, and forget the stain ?
Doth not lone Rhea mourn amid the pines
That prisoned Atus, press the violets
So sanguine purple, and Mainalion Pan
Make trembling music through the fondled reed ?
If the great gods slight not such memory
In their immortal joyaunce, should I strive
To put away my youth's so sacred grief
Who ne'er have overlaid it with new mirth ?

He is so like—the same lithe shapely limbs
 And beamy temples, ere fell Artemis
 Brought fury on him ; but I am a fool
 To let the slight similitude so blunt
 My crafty brain from its keen policy.
 He must be broken of his high resolve,
 Made a Court puppet, dealt with tenderly,
 Untoathed, ere kept for pastime, cruel sport !
 But I am sick to-day, and galled meseems
 More than my wont by that deep griding wound
 That gives me pangs so uncontrollable
 Ofttimes I shroud in a feigned lethargy
 And lie as dead to wrestle with my grief,
 Or plot huge mischief with my angry brain.
 Oh, how I dread the dark companionship
 Of the fell thing that gripes me ! Is there hope
 Anteia errs not, saying the rare drug
 She sends me will have power to put to sleep
 My wakeful soul's mysterious misery ?
 Why, I can drink it, and then lie and brood
 How best to spoil the young Bellerophôn ;
 For when I suffer I must do some harm.

SCENE III.—BELLEROPHÔN *is discovered lying in a wood.*

BELLEROPHÔN.

I have spent hours within the pathless woods
 Where frolic satyrs with the leafed thigh

In sportful ravage through the underwood
Make broken tracts that tempt the threading feet,
And plunge them deeper into bowery maze
Of interwoven foliage and sky.
As kind this tent of heaven-obscuring green
To wearied mind, as eyelid to the eye
'Pressed by too fierce a noon. All trivial things,
A honey-hearted bloom, a passing bee,
A leaf of ivy pied with purple veins,
Find their right place as playfellows with thought
Oppressed by visiting of higher theme.
Mine ear, accustomed to the covert guile
Of low-breathed falsehood, catches gratefully
The windy secrets whispered to the flowers.
And 'mid this laughing leafery I feel
So freshened to the heart, with new resolve
I think of my high enterprise, and brand
By its true name of cowardice my pause
In Lykia's Court. Twice has the moon fulfilled
Her golden circlet, yet my purposed deed
Grows not to globe from crescent, and my will,
But for the verdure that the spirit takes
When great emotions flood it and forsake,
As fields grow green when swollen waters ebb,
Would be unquickened from sterility
To fruitful action. My Polubios,
How this sweet solitude doth give me thought
Of Korinth, the cool plane-trees, from afar
Aigaios' fulgent purple white with isles,
Where oft my wistful eyes beheld in dream

A beakèd ship to bear me to the coasts
 Of Lykia, where I knew Chimaira lay,
 When I had gathered strength through the still years
 For deeds of herohood, and having learnt
 To rule the horse, with subtler curb to rein
 My senses, and to use my lawless thought
 To musical enthrallment, should have might
 To march against the chaos of the world.
 No Cheirôn reared his pupil to a power
 Of finer kingship, or e'er gave to youth
 Through seeming pastime such solemnity.
 And I, so quickened, so restrained, grow slack,
 Bring shame to thy rare discipline, and dare
 Let thy Bellerophôn become the slave
 Of a queen's blandishments, and idly stay
 The will of wasted Lykia's sluggard lord.
 It shall not be : to-morrow I will face
 The triple death, unguarded and alone.

SCENE IV.—*A chamber in the palace of XANTHOS.*

ERINNA *asleep.* Her maidens CHLÔRIS, GORGÊ, and
 ADRASTEIA *watching her.*

CHLÔRIS.

O kindly sleep, leave not these sunken lids,
 Give me a little respite from my care !
 The Queen is safe in thy blind sovereignty

And I can gossip ; yet there is a sneer
Left like a footprint on the snow, athwart
The bloodless lips that marks her dangerous.
Her face has grown unlovely in disease.
Look at her, Gorgê ! Why, my grandmother,
Who 'tells of heroes twenty times as great
As these who live to-day, while busily
Her yellow fingers flit among the threads,
Is scarce as withered. Yet two years ago
I saw her led a bright and deep-veiled bride
To cheer our unsponsored lord.

GORGÊ.

And it is strange
How he still dotes on her. Why, on my life,
She rules the army, council, Court, and town—
Looks death-like, but ne'er dies. She seems a strange
Enchanted being, and I've heard it said
That in her youth a friend of Kirkê laid
A charm upon her, and begirt her waist
So firmly with cold snakes, that ever since
Their impress girds her body, and makes chill
The heart within her ; so they say.

ADRASTEIA.

I've seen
A deep-gashed scar, but that was on her breast.

GORGÊ.

'Tis all the same ; doubtless the tale is true,

As most tales are i' the core. What was the hue,
Red blackened, or a smeary green?

ADRASTEIA.

Methinks

Purple, with filmy edge ; below the swell
Of the right breast : she ever drapes it o'er.

CHLÔRIS.

She starts ! Ye gods, I would she might not wake
Till the strange passion that possesses her
Have loosed its griping claw upon her mind.
Last even, when she drank the potion off
Brought from Anteia by that lovely youth
I would run miles to see, a curious change
Came over her, and, silent for a while,
She groaned, and ground her teeth, and then relapsed
Into a tranced silence ; then she ground
Her teeth again, as savage for some prey.

GORGÊ.

Take care then of thy tongue. Her eyes are wide,
But—oh, they see not ! Touch her with thine hand,
She cannot wake.

CHLÔRIS.

Nay, leave her to her trance,
Spoil not our chat. What of that lovely youth
Who brought the potion ?

GORGÊ.

Hush ! I dare not speak.
The thought that there is sight beneath that glaze,
As water under ice, appals me, makes
A culprit of my tongue.

CHLÔRIS (*to ADRASTEIA*).

Here's one less nice !
Wilt *thou* refuse to speak of that fair youth ?

ADRASTEIA.

Of him I'd speak for ever ; but she looks
So dreadful in her withered, wide-eyed sleep ;—
Good Chlôris, wake her.

CHLÔRIS.

Let her wake herself,
Or never wake again for all I care ;
Sour, sickly thing !

ERINNA (*stirring*).

Water : my tongue is hard.

ADRASTEIA (*aside to CHLÔRIS*).

Chlôris, she heard, begone. (*Exit CHLÔRIS.*) Good
Gorgê, fill—

ERINNA.

Drink ! but I cannot swallow ; lift me up,
Or I—

BELLEROPHON.

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ADRASTEIA.

Fill faster, Gorgê ; raise her head
And lift the goblet to her lips.

ERINNA (*after drinking*).

The drink—

ADRASTEIA.

More water, Gorgê !

ERINNA.

No, no ; run to him,
He saw me drink it ; dar'st thou to delay ?

ADRASTEIA.

I do not know, dear Queen, whom I should call ?

ERINNA.

The King ! the King ! Run fast ; I cannot wait,
I cannot longer wait for my revenge
On that young traitor ; would that I could crush,
Flatten his limbs in torture. Feel my hand—
Does it not fiercely burn ? [*Exit* ADRASTEIA.]

GORGÊ.

'Tis hot indeed !

ERINNA.

Aitné's not hotter. Gorgê, that bold girl

Who waspish stung my sleep shall die to-night ;
There is sweet news for thee !

GORGÆ.

O Queen, my knees,
Yea, my whole body is a suppliant
For her, my fellow-slave. Three weary nights
She has kept faithful watch ; and now, o'er-tired,
Talks wildly in a craze of drowsiness.
Have some compassion—

ERINNA.

She shall soundly sleep
To-night, my child. (*To IOBATES, who enters*) My lord,
I have awaked
From the strange grave in which he buried me,
The vile Korinthian traitor, with the drug
He foisted on me as Anteia's balm,
Prisoning me fast within myself, my limbs
Torpide, my senses seeming locked, to writhe
In the close stricture of some monstrous shape
That seemed Chimaira groping for my heart.
It is too horrible : such magic lurks
In the foul remedies, their venom'd fumes
Smoke in my brain, their dire fangs probe my heart,
Their draught is on my tongue ; my swelling brain
Is big with madness.

IOBATES.

From thy suffering

His torture shall be copied and enlarged
Who wrought this woe. Bellerophôn, thy doom
The Fates will blanch to spin !

ERINNA.

Drink not to-night
Thy evening cup, lest poison darkly lurk
Beneath the crimson foam. He seeks our lives,
And with our lives, our throne.

CHLÔRIS (*without*).

Come, Gorgê, come !
[*Exit* GORGÊ.]

ERINNA.

How wilt thou punish him ?

IOBATES.

With bitter death.

ERINNA.

Call'st thou that punishment ? Despair and shame.
I am a woman : finer is my sense
Of pain. If thou wouldst have fine punishment
Leave it to me. Let him be straitly bound
And thrown alive to the Chimaira's jaws
He thought to break. That is my punishment.
The way is long ; so long will be the pain,
Disgrace, despair.

D

GORGÊ (*re-entering*).

The youth is now without.

ERINNA.

Bring him in quickly. Weeping art thou? Go.

[BELLEROPHÔN *entering*.

IOBATES.

(*Aside*) He comes, and he is white; he knows his doom.

(*Aloud*) Wretch, thou hast doubly wronged me; not
enough

My violated child, thou must attempt

The life of my own queen, and with thy rank

Black potion anguish her. So take my curse

Before my punishment.

BELLEROPHÔN.

Ye holy gods,

I am as innocent of these dread crimes

As in the sinless womb.

ERINNA.

Consummate liar,

How well this feigning shows thy depth of guilt!

Beginners are irresolute, confused;

Thou—traitor past the blush; not fit to live.

BELLEROPHÔN.

And deadly sick to die!

IOBATES.

Ay, die thou shalt.
 Shame shall be porter at Death's gate for thee.
 Hear now thy doom—a just one—to be thrown,
 Thy bare limbs bound, to the grim beast the gods,
 Mistaking somewhat of thy character,
 Deputed thee to slay. (BELLEROPHÓN *staggers*.) Erinna,
 thou
 Art a most fell Tisiphonê ; the thought
 Cravens our hero.

BELLEROPHÓN (*in a low voice*).

O Polubios,
 To die thus !

IOBATES (*to ADRASTEIA*).

Bid the guard attend me here.
 [*Exit ADRASTEIA.*]

ERINNA (*aside*).

So still he stands, so beautiful, so like—
 (*Aloud*) My lord, call back my maids ; I need their help ;
 Go quickly for them, or I die.

Re-enter ADRASTEIA, GORGÊ, and Guards.

IOBATES.

They come.
 (*To Guards*) Bind ! and prepare to start at early dawn

To the Chimaira's Vale. To-night, attend
 My further orders. (*To BELLEROPHÔN*) Traitor, from my
 sight. [*Exit Guards with BELLEROPHÔN.*]

ERINNA (*aside*).

Yea, and from mine ; I cannot save him now.
 (*Aloud*) Leave me, my lord ; thy face but tortures me
 When my pain grows to frenzy, and I feel
 Strain of a gathering spasm. (*Exit IOBATES.*) Very
 like :—
 Yet the hair scarce as bright : ay, he went mad—
 I was so cold—went mad, and wounded me ;
 They murdered him ; but I have kept the wound,
 Have tended it,—yet not to close the rent
 In my torn breast. Now I am easier
 It bleeds free. I can take a little rest.

SCENE V.—*By a fountain in a remote village.* BEL-
 LEROPHÔN bound. Two Soldiers, an Old Man, and
 a Maiden.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Here will we rest during the sultry hours
 Of noon. My limbs ache, and my tongue is hard
 Between my lips, like the stone lion's set
 Panting at Xanthos' gate. How cool this rest !

Comrade, unlink thyself from yon parched wretch ;
Let him gasp on untethered, till we've quenched
Our thirst : we had strict charge to torture him,
And doubtless he will suffer in the sun :
There, kick him out in the full blaze, while we
Couch in the leafy labyrinth and cool,
For I am somewhat dizzy.

SECOND SOLDIER.

We might spare
Ourselves the weary journey, with more cords
Lashing our patient captive to the trunk
Of that black cypress by the fountain brim ;
But then we should not see Chimaira gorge,
A sight to boast of all our after life.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Now I am down thou canst not raise me up.—
Old man, thou knowest well the reeking vale,
Haply hast fed its monster with thy ewes
When they outstrayed thy shepherding ; direct
Our feet, and say if three more sultry hours
Will bring us to the beetling cliff.

OLD MAN.

I scarce
Can tell—no shepherd, but a villager
Busy about my vines, and little prone
To stray beyond their wanton leafery
In search of wonders ; yet of late I crossed

A pale wild youth in golden armour, mad
For one to guide him to the spot ye seek.
He dazed me so I was quite stupefied
And spake no word ; but oft in winter time
The goatherd, this maid's father, tells of black
Waste country, sown with rocks as dragon's teeth,
There to the north ; and more, when I was young—
I well recall it—my poor father once—
'Tis fifty years ago—came staggering home,
Stuttering about a dragon, and then died.
I liked it not, and since have never been
Northwards at all ; so more I cannot tell.

MAIDEN (*aside*).

That poor bound youth who lies so still, they give
No water to him. He looks very tired.
I wonder if I might one cupful catch
And take it to him. I will wait my time.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Well, if thou canst not guide us, thou at least
Canst give us what will help us on our way.
A draught of goat's milk will not hurt us, or
Thy grapes : let's try their flavour.

OLD MAN.

Then, this way.

[Old Man *and* Soldiers *turn aside*.

MAIDEN (*coming quickly to BELLEROPHON*).

I have some water for thee : drink.

BELLEROPHON.

Sweet child,

Thine act is even fairer than thy face !

I cannot lift my arm to take the cup,

Tend me as I were dying— (*He drinks and lies back.*)

If thou wilt,

Kiss me, as I were dead.

MAIDEN.

Nay, thou shalt live.

Show me the knot ; I will unbind thee straight.

Lie still, while I untwist the cords.

BELLEROPHON.

Not so,

My gentlest, for the gods would have me die—

With them I strive not ; and thou must be gone.

My guards are ruffianly, and finding thee—

I hear their feet : farewell.

[*The Maiden kisses him, and rises hastily.*]

OLD MAN.

Child, come away ;

He is a criminal condemned to die

By our good King. (*Dragging her off.*) What would thy
mother say ?

FIRST SOLDIER.

Ay, she is over-prying ; look to her !
And cunning too, unplaiting the firm cords
We know the secret of. Here, take the rope (*giving it
to the Old Man*)
And tie her hands from mischief ; while we try
Rather to rouse this fellow from his swoon,
And set in earnest to our task. Strike up
This mountain path. I trust he is not dead,
Lying so still and pale. We'll drag him on
By his dead hair, if we have but his corpse.
Why, he still winces ! That is well.—Lead on.

SCENE VI.—POLUBIOS *and* BELLEROPHÔN *are discovered
in a grove near Korinth.*

BELLEROPHÔN.

My master, I am once more at thy feet,
And now can crowd into thine ear the thoughts
That from their earliest motion spread themselves
Toward thee as fixedly as toward the sun
The branchèd tree bends its desiring arms.

POLUBIOS.

My best-loved scholar, through our mingled years
No favour of Athênê has been mine

I have not parted fruitwise unto thee
 With my free hand. But say, how hast thou fared?
 Sweet is the incommunicable tongue,
 The never-wearying soliloquy
 Of lovers, when debarred their natural speech;
 But sweeter far the broken thought, the word
 Of which a smile is final syllable,
 The converse where thought ripens in the glow
 Of listening face, and fervid questioner,
 Ere desire travels to the urgent lips,
 Receives oracular response. Divine
 Thus, my Bellerophôn, interpret all
 My love in its great need of thee requires.

BELLEROPHÔN.

Oh, my dear master, I did fondly dream
 Not to return to thee till I had won
 The herohood for which thou didst prepare,
 Nurture, and knit my soul. Most impotent,
 Nerveless, and nauseate, with weakened hand,
 Too sick to wrestle with the thing it loathes,
 Thou dost receive me.

POLUBIOS.

What has then bechanced?
 Methought thou wert Athênê's own, secure
 From fitfulness, serenely resolute;
 And even in my joy of thee I found
 In my dread goddess' more superb content
 Supremest ecstasy. How hast thou failed?

BELLEROPHÔN.

I have been lustful, foolish, arrogant,
Of pride to plot Chimaira's ruin, and
Of cowardice to flee her shudderingly.

POLUBIOS.

How didst thou arm thyself?

BELLEROPHÔN.

With my own breast ;
But her foul belchèd breath as pestilence
Palsied my heart and will.

POLUBIOS.

Why didst thou seek
To dam the smoky mouths? Scorched Lykia
Moved thee to this compassion?

BELLEROPHÔN.

Nay, the need
Of doing something worthy of thy praise ;
And, for the rest, it was my queen's desire
That I should slay the monster, or be slain.

POLUBIOS.

Anteia had not sent thee to such foe
Save for some great offence. Chimaira's self
Had been a prey with which to glut thy sword
Hadst thou been true. It is most pitiful
To see the warrior-boy Athênê gave

To my sole charge thus miserably cowed
By an untasted foe. Almost the sight
Moves me to pray the unforgiving One
To turn full eyes on thee—thine unused arms ;
Nor yet the shame of ungashed shield effaced
By carriage of thy corpse. But, ere I bring
On thee the curse of thy great Nurturer,
Fully confess to me, what urged the Queen
To throw thee to the great She-Viciousness ?

BELLEROPHÔN.

My foster-father, I will tell thee all ;
But, ere I tell thee what is tale of shame
To thy pure hope of me, I must beseech
Thou wilt remember that I give my hurts
For healing, and ungentle surgery
From thee is mortal. I have borne the sneer
Of Argos, and of Lykia's disdain
Am proudly tolerant ; Polubios' scorn
Will maniac my despair. I am not fallen
Low as thy thought ; help me, compassionate,
Or thy worst fears of me thou wilt fulfil,
Making my mind familiar with the mask
In which thou dressest me, who am as yet
Bellerophôn, yea, worthily thine own,
Though fallen in evil case.

POLUBIOS.

'Tis hard to greet
A wan-faced, woundless boy with gentleness.

Thou com'st to tell me that thou art afraid,
Who shouldst be more afraid to tell me so ;
I would confirm thy righteous estimate
Of thine unworth, did I not wait to hear
What thou canst urge—

BELLEROPHON.

Of thee I have no fear,
Polubios ; yet, were there in me aught
That answered to the name thou givest me,
Now shrinkingly it would reveal itself ;
For thee I hold in reverence, and such dread
It were a light thing thy condemning hand
Should ghost me, but beyond endurance' stretch
To bear a self that was not in thy thought ;
To be—not the Bellerophôn thy love
Had moulded for itself, or to disguise
A spirit given as unreservedly
To thy wise scrutiny and providence
As a babe's body to its nurse's eyes.

POLUBIOS.

Thou hast been frank with me, and patiently
I will prepare to listen ; but to help
Is past my power. Confess thou art a fool ;
I will confess a lifetime of lost pains,
And so we end.

BELLEROPHON.

So, irretrievably,

My master? then to heaven I make appeal :
 "Athênê, thy young soldier faltered once—
 Dost thou dismiss him from the battle-field?"

POLUBIOS.

If thou hast blundered, thou hadst best rebuke
 Thyself, and blunderingly repair the wrong ;
 When wisdom deigns to chasten, every stripe
 Is branded as it falls, and thou wilt wear
 Her marks about thee, past thy funeral pyre.

BELLEROPHÔN.

Wisdom's scourged slave I were not shamed so much,
 As cast beyond the pale of punishment ;
 But, O my father, this despair of me
 Raises me to self-rescue desperately ;
 See then in me thus spurned beneath thy foot
 One who will be Chimaira's conqueror,
 So help the heavenly powers !

POLUBIOS.

If thus thy will
 Lives as a rebel to the hopelessness
 Fast chaining thee, thou may'st be liberate.
 Now to the tale of thy captivity ;
 Thou left'st me for the Argive Court—

BELLEROPHÔN.

And there
 Found in King Proitos a right gentle lord ;

His trusted warrior-comrade I became,
And of his queen the faithful servant, so
I thought, and innocently took each sign
Of condescending favour. Gradually
It crossed me there was something in her look
Of passionate request, and the frank love
I took so frankly, grew a suppliant
Hungry and wild, as it would rave, denied
The food that it was lean for : obdurate
I passed her by, though the heart-clamorous face
Haunted me like a beggar unrelieved ;
And when she stooped to ask that alms of me
A woman's majesty forbids to crave,
I so abhorred to see her fallen state,
So shuddered at the thought that mine had been
The profanating presence, and so yearned
For love—another love and innocent,
That should ennoble me as this defiled—
That as fierce hail outbreaking on the vines
I smote her. From her lord I learnt next day
He destined me to slay Chimaira, or,
As I divined, a morsel for her jaws ;
Howbeit he banished me to Lykia.

POLUBIOS.

Clean-hearted to the beast ; what spotted thee,
At Xanthos ? there the taint !

BELLEROPHÔN.

Anteia's self

Was maidenly and fresh as Artemis
Beside her guileful step-dame, who at first
Detained me tenderly, and sighing swore
Lykia's last youth should be consumed, ere I
Should have her royal leave to wreck so fair
A copy of Olumpian majesty
As my rare-fashioned self. I was too sad
To heed her lightness, and with resolute
Persistence made entreaty to the King
For arms and meet equipment. Sullenly,
As if half-fearful I should be to him
An enemy it would need direr craft
To circumvent than the three-headed beast,
He gave consent; and while for fitting guide
Still lingering, his young queen fell sick, and I
Remembered that Anteia bade me give
To her a medicine of property
To dissipate her languor. It was done;
And from that instant she hath drawn no breath
Unquickened by the lust to ruin me.
Her torment strengthened to an agony,
She vowed, on application of the salve,
The venom'd salve false-named Anteia's gift,
And urged Iobates with vehemence
To give me escort to the scarpèd rock
Within whose hollow cave the monster couched,
Belching thick vapour even to the brow.
They took me to the sheerest edge, and there,
Blinded, half-stifled, as in looking down
An angry crater, hurled me hurriedly

To the hid monster's lair. I chanced to fall
'Mid the soft putrid droppings of its maw
Noiseless and safe ; and from my whelmèd eyes
Cleansing the clay, and floundering from the stench
Oozy yet half-volcanic of its breath,
I peered at the triparte malignity
Of the vast drowsing mass ;—the globy head
Shagged like a lion, dusky, ferine-faced,
But, for the death-depressing paws, a pair
Of feeble goat-hoofs curled beneath the chin.
The serpent-body, banded, convolute,
A stubborn cable of life-throttling folds,
Filled the grim gorge, so that I feared to climb
The rock, lest my uncertain foot should fail
And, stumbling on the tangled ropeage, rouse
The torpid creature to the deathful grip.
Suffering with vision's keener faculty,
That grasps a peril as its prey, worse pang
Than the constriction of those numbing folds,
I writhed, I felt the ice-thongs press my heart,
When thought of dread Athênê leaning calm
Above the aegis of the gory head
Smote me and thrilled. "Make me invisible,"
I swiftly prayed, and in a blinding cloud
Of crocus-coloured radiance warmed and wrapped
I lay, Chimaira quite obliterate
In the enshielding shine. Emerging thence
I opened on familiar ground, and long
Rested upon the scarpèd rock in doubt :
Far off bright Xanthos ; but amid its fanes

A monster whom I could not suffocate
Tainted the air ; and oh, the unstopped mouths
Of the still-reeking gorge ! I could not stay
Nor rapidly escape, for in my limbs
Lingered the clutch of that imprisoning cold
From which my heart was now emancipate ;
But, goading as a charioteer the steeds
That pace not with his will's velocity,
I lashed my lagging self, and presently
Took sea to Korinth, to lay bare my shame
To the sole glance that can inflict the pain
Meet for my obloquy ; yet when I came
To border of the quiet grove I knew
Thy haunt, and heard in memory the voice
My childhood's monitor, I slunk away,
And wandered amid desolating tracts
Pining and fevered, till in agony
A cry broke from me : " Seek Chimaira's jaws ;
Hurl thyself rather from the scarpèd rock
A prey to the blind ravin, than endure
Rebuke intolerable, and proclaim
Polubios' scholar a mere craven dolt."
And doubtless I had crept away to die
Half fascinate to the untoward den
That spectred me so brain-sickly, unless
From heaven I had received a sign that gave
Me strength to bear thy spirit's grieved amaze
And sharpness of derisive speech, not rough
As to a faultful child one would amend,
But death-provoking in its bitterness.

POLUBIOS.

Hush, hush ! Thou spakest to me of a sign ;
That news is to mine ear, as to the eye
Of some great leader overwhelmed the sight
Of a white-armoured warrior rallying
The soldiers he despairs of. Do not pause.

BELLEROPHÓN.

My father, scarce I dare to give thee cause
To deem that Heaven hath looked relently
On one thou doomest. Oft the burnished clouds
Spread scintillating plumes, and through the blue
Glide silently ; nay, but it looked not so,
That fleet tempestuous lustre, hurricane
Of splendour, shaking dewy stars adown
Its glittering flanks ; for to my dazzled eyes
It seemed a steed—Poseidón's courser, plunged
In heaven's white-breasted waves, that rearing tossed
The sun-spray from its mane.

POLUBIOS.

Hath Pégasos

Appeared to thee ? if so, my child, thou art
Dear to the gods, and doomed to stormy days
Of rapture, peril, unenlightened gloom.
Oh, tell me how it chanced to thee ?

BELLEROPHON.

I lay
 In the long grass and sobbed ; Athênê's eyes
 Looked down above the aigissed head so calm,
 Full of great gifts of strength and fortitude
 For warriors who were worthy, but on me
 Bent in strict inquisition and rebuke :
 I could not bear it, and hid deep my face
 In the cool grass, yet through my thronging tears
 Prayed passionate for succour. To my sleep
 Or waking—for I started as from sleep—
 Came this divinest dream ; but what it bodes
 I know not, dare not hope. A glory breaks
 Over the face whose smile I thought was dead,
 Seeing I found no trace of it about
 Its well-spring on the brow. Polubios,
 Thou too hast seen the vision.

POLUBIOS.

Very like :
 The gods are gracious, and have given mine eyes
 Their fill of beauty ; from the shady hills
 To the rich aureate purples of the sea
 All life hath brought to me its loveliest
 Fragrance, and hue, and song ; and by the fount
 Fluttering the maiden hair, Peirênê's pure
 And precious spring, resting one day among
 The tender Naiades who have their bowers
 Amid the iris-beds, and love the cool

Light of the limpid waters :—thus at rest
One day beside my gentle playfellows,
I saw like thee a ruffle in the clouds,
And then beside me, drinking at the stream,
Thy radiant horse. “Should he be riderless?”
Half to myself I said, and from the throng
Of fair girls, emulous with clover-sweets
To tempt the dainty browser, one looked back
Clear-eyed and grave, and answered, “Pégasos
Still wanders masterless, yet whosoe’er
Sees him, and hath a will of strength to curb
A creature who will frenzy through the clouds
Long as the bit-sore maddens, may bestride,
Yea, turn him with the least touch of his hand :
But such consummate horsemanship to gain
Is arduous, and the failure fall from heaven.”
I knew my mistress’s voice, and often mused
On what her words of menacing allure
Might mean for me, who dare not trust my hand
To rein the kingly creature, nor had need
Of his winged prowess. Thou, Bellerophôn,
Shalt overcome : the cheek Chimaira paled
Wears now its natural manhood, and shall flush
Ere long with triumph. Thou art tasked of heaven,
My child, my joy ! Seek straight Athênê’s shrine.
To her high charge thy master now commits
The spirit dearer to him than the dawn
To his light-drinking eyes.

BELLEROPHÔN.

Thou praisest me
Who asked for pardon. O Polubios,
Sweeter than praise or pardon is thy trust.

ACT III.

PÊGASOS.

SCENE I.—*Time: midnight. BELLEROPHON asleep in the shrine of ATHÊNÊ.*

ATHÊNÊ enters, a lamp in her hand.

ATHÊNÊ.

A sleep

So beautiful, I fain would have thee laid,
My perfect warrior, in the arms of Death,
Of plume-browed Death, that he might bear thee fast
Across the deep-blue darkness big with stars
And lay thee in some loneliness, where I
Might brood upon thee with superb content,
Shaming the Cytherean's ecstasy
Over her trancèd love. And yet not thus
Would I conceal thee; rather shouldst thou wake
Unfrighted in the halls of Zeus, to share
His council and make history his commands.
I will prepare thee for that rank, thou pure

In deed, devout in thought, and wise in dream.
 Thus I endow thee with the golden curb
 That gives thee masterhood of the divine,
 And temperance in bliss so perilous
 Frenzy were little fault. Bellerophôn (*waking him*),
 So urgent that thou hallowest the hours
 Of sleep with supplication, I am come
 To answer thee and aid. With sacrifice
 Seek first Poseidôn's favour.

BELLEROPHÔN.

But of thee
 I must be holpen. Bend thus over me,
 Lamping thine own majestic maidenhood
 Till its clear image shape within my heart.
 Look on me with thy steadfast eyes, their calm
 Conquers Chimaira ; let me look on her
 In mirror of thy strength, I shall o'ercome ;
 As he who, reflex in thy shield, beheld
 \ Secure the Gorgon face that frayed the world.
 But tell me first why I am bidden sue
 Poseidôn : from no breakers of the sea,
 But from the shimmering billow in the cloud
 Broke the winged prowess whose swift glittering,
 Shaming the eagle's pinion and the sun,
 Roused me to hope and energy. (*ATHÊNÊ offers him the*
bridle in her hand.) My Queen,
 Let not this curb, that answers to the hand
 Haply of Hêrê, heavenly charioteer,
 When the soft-moving Hours her coursers chafe,

Unbarring heaven's portals languidly,
And her white arms strained o'er the rearing necks
Restrain imperially the wrathful team,
Be laid in mine, the slave of every pulse
That feeds its fitful life.

ATHÊNÊ.

For Pégasos
Keep thou this bridle. By Peirênê's fount
Ofttimes he stoops to drink : no goddess e'er
Hath reined a steed so terrible ; to thee
A lordship that Zeus uses sparingly,
Lading him with the lightning, never yet
Yoking him to the car.

BELLEROPHÔN.

Most impiously
In thought or act I surely must have erred
To this condemning honour to be doomed ;
Thou wouldst that I should perish—

ATHÊNÊ.

Or prevail.
To those they love the gods give awful choice :
Mere mortals waver 'twixt a little worse,
A little better ; the elected soul
Soars to Olumpus, or by Tartaros
Is sucked abysmally.

BELLEROPHON.

More terrible

Seems to me the bright creature I must curb
Than the armed turpitude, the numbing sloth,
That drew Death's sickening drowse about my brain,
So dizzying the capture ; yet if she
Who gives the bridle gives the reining hand,
My victory is past. I shall be free,
If my hope totter not to insolence,
To see the lovely bride-bed of the dawn,
And the tear dropt from Eôs' eyes for grief
Of him her hungering love immortalized
To eld's decrepitude ; to feel the wheels
Of Phoibos' chariot cut the golden dew,
And the fierce strain of the uptoiling car
Rutting the clouds with splendour ; to keep count
With Hermês of his snowy flock ; to rest
In earth's unfooted forests in the noon,
Waking at nest-time with the breeze and stars ;
To dream through all the moonlight's broideries
Of the limbs' keener whiteness they invest,
The lovely bosom glimpsing as it heaves
Over the blest Endumiôn.

ATHÈNÈ.

For this

I do not horse thee ; but for higher feat.
Not for the revelry of solitude
I give thee mastership of this rare steed,

But to equip thee perfectly in war
 That needs Olumpos' cavalry. Be wise ;
 Bear thee as mine own soldier ; through all doubt,
 Danger, or toil, look constantly to me,
 And I will task thee unremittingly
 Till the clear sundown. Then, if thou wilt dream—

BELLEROPHÔN.

Enkindle my soul's slumber, till I wake.

SCENE II.—*At the fountain Peirênê. EURUNOMÊ and Nymphs.*

SEMI-CHORUS OF NYMPHS.

Dead is hyacinthine night,
 Living is the aureate light,
 A piercing splendour through the clouds is cast.
 The veiled queen of sleep and dream
 Is buried, and her coal-black team
 Feed in oblivion's unploughed fields : at last
 The day comes fast.

SEMI-CHORUS II.

The plummy woods are lighter ;
 Grape-tinted seas are choral
 With music motion-born.
 The crownèd hills grow brighter,
 The hills that made a darkness in the sky.
 The lion-coloured sweeps of corn
 O'erwrought with broidery floral,

The red of poppies, colour's wine,
Than which gods know none more divine,—
In the broad sun-smile lie.

CHORUS.

Eôs' soft-pacèd chariot wakes the world ;
The glistening leaves breathe low ; the clouds have furled
Their white sails up, and leave clear seas of beryl shade ;
The wind that nightly roams among the pines
Now sleeping, in their silent shade reclines,
A harper, near whose side his voiceless harp is laid.

Roses with glowing lips the radiance greet !
Sweet as to Bacchant's lips the wine is sweet,
The warmth of crimson flush to the dull bowered leaf ;
The sullen-rinded fruits to sanguine husk
Burnish and brown, or dull to bloomy dusk ;
Only the things of Pain, Death, Darkness suffer grief.

For light is as a sap by which we lift
Green upward heads, and gather each rich gift
Of never-sleeping growth and mighty swaying thought
With utterance Dodonic ; and if reft
Of this in soul or body, we are left
To blacken into Death, to fall and be as nought.

Yet, though we have the light, still are we weary,
Still is the limpid fountain lone and dreary,
With all its tumbling waves and dipping maiden-hair ;
It seems without some presence that it needs,—
An oak without its Dryad, or the reeds
Unsheaved by circling arms of nymph or naiad fair.

EURUNOMÊ.

Ye happy-throated choristers, be still !
Your voluble expectancy but chafes

The pressure of impatience at my heart ;
The silv'riest sound is an impediment ;
The very echoes in the hills annoy,
Ruffling the path of creaseless quietness,
For which alone heaven's Pasturer will leave
The purple plains of perfect solitude.
The quiver of a passing bird will raise
The gentle creature from his restfulness,
When from our crowding hands he crops the flowers,
Skims the pure fount, or lets the fern-leaves fleck
With wandering shade, pinions the thunder-cloud,
Sweeps over darkening with cerulean gloom.
Rare, lustrous feathers ! Argent fantasies
Outswanning Lêda's love ; far, far more bright
Than Cynthia's veil, when for Endymiôn
She wore her bridal moon-wreaths, or the breast
Of Aphroditê flowering from the foam ;
Yet the pure ravishment of light restrained
From glitter, in a dim embroidering dark,
A silken fillet of so varied thread,
The thousand subtle silvers of the sea,
The purple bloom that passes in the air
When the wind waves a field of amaranth,
Humettos' heathy blush, the rose that lies
On mountain ridges, fulgent in the sun,
Flash through the fleecy iris, or with beam
Mild as the milky opal, marry dyes
Of interlucent loveliness. Sweet choir,
He lingers still ; my heart grows wearier
With these vain images ; as one who loves

The star-lands aches before the heaven's void,
 The fervour dies in me ;—so fair a dawn,
 His chosen hour, a rainbow thwart the fount
 That is so dear to him, yet he delays !
 Peirênê, thou bright treasury of tears,
 I will enrich thee with mine own eyes' dew,
 Though thou hast little need, so brimmingly
 Thou bubblest up, as irrepressible
 Strong sobs had rent a chasm through the earth
 And flooded their own fissure. Summer drought
 Hushes thee not ; when fainting rivulets
 Forsake their burning beds, thou flowest on,
 Thy waters fail not ; they can never fail,
 Springing afresh from the ne'er-lessening grief
 Of an unchilded mother. Sacred well,
 Deep-buried sorrow that can never dry,
 Eurynomê beseeches ; far beneath
 Let there rise, softened by the muffling stream
 The voice of thy immitigable woe.

PEIRÊNÊ'S SONG.

I.

O maiden, bend nearer, my voice will tell clearer
 The grief that is dearer than roses to May ;
 My swoln heart for its sorrow the waves' blue sobs must borrow,
 The pressure of pent waters, the swirl of sudden spray.

II.

Droop fernlike thy tresses, my childless heart blesses
 Thy breath that caresses my desolate grief :
 Mine eyes hope-forsaken, my bosom passion-shaken,
 Will never stay their torrent, and never find relief.

III.

Green summer with flowers, and autumn that dowers
The ripe corn-brown hours with glory and grain ;
Winter with gray lips colder than dawn, and snowy shoulder,
Will find me ever keeping watch by my unburied pain.

IV.

Sweet leaves damp has deadened, the sun's last kiss reddened,
'Neath skies by storm leadened, fall round me each year ;
Yet from their death hath risen, like songs from a dark prison,
Blue fragrant violets filling from hidden founts the air.

V.

The violet tufts tressing, against the pines pressing,
Stands Rhea, caressing the love she must miss ;
Fancy my loss ne'er lessens, rather the anguish freshens,
My musing lips ache sorer for my dead boy's ravished kiss.

Oh, listen, thou deep-wailing one, who dream'st
Thou art at grief's great goal. Dear is the fount
That can suffice the thirst of Pégasos,
But he who drinketh of thy urgent tears
Owes life to a profounder agony—
The blackest drops from the rived heart, distort
With maiden pangs for love. Ah ! couldst thou hear
His birth-song, I would sing it back to thee,
And thou wouldst stay thy weeping, as in storm
The soft rain pauses that the ravishing
South wind may whirl with desolating coil,
Wither and scorch, embitter, and defile,
A drift of anguish ! Hearken. Once to me
Came, fresh from parting with her dearest child,
Dêmêtêr, the lean mother, and she laid

Her head upon my bosom ; said that so
 She loved to cradle on her daughter's breast,
 And told me of her daughter—how one day
 Aidôneus from her crimson poppies snatched
 The girl, and plunged to Hadês. “ And, my maid,
 I open thus my grief, seeing thee fond
 Like my Persephonê of plucking buds
 Culled in wide wandering. Ah, my pretty one,
 Why dost thou leave thy shy sisterhood ?
 Hast thou no fear ? Think of Aidôneus' bride,
 And more, when thou wouldst reckless grow, of me,
 Who made the whole earth hunger to express
 The famine at my heart.” I pitied her,
 Peirênê, trusted, told her all my life—
 How that no fear molested me, no dread
 Of hell's up-ploughing coursers ; for my thought
 Was all of Pégasos, who sometimes bent
 His flight to the sweet fountain I was wont
 To play beside : and then my heart outbroke
 With—“ Mother, half my days I spend in search
 Of him, 'mid heaven's 'blue fire,' or in the nooks
 Of shiny cloud, till I am dazed and blind
 And tear-entangled ; then I droop my head,
 And, gazing on the stream, wait quietly
 With humbled hope for reflex of the form
 Wave-dimmed for my beholding.” Then she sighed—
 Dêmêtêr sighed : “ My child, I would thou hadst
 A baby at thy bosom, and the heart
 Of some young hero to make glad and calm.
 Give not thy maidenhood to idle dreams.

This beast is born of maniac desire,
 And love of him will wreck thee." Then she told
 Of her Athênê left with hope of death
 To end her bitter course. But I will sing.

BIRTH-SONG OF PEGASOS.

Did thy life leap out from the burning blue fire of heaven—
 From "the glimmering blaze of the lighted sea?" *
 With travail of thee were the white clouds riven?
 Did the waves dispart that thou might'st be free?
 Art thou child of the air when the Orient thrilled her?
 Did Death, kissing Hêbé, beget thee his dream?
 Storm of Semelé's heart, and the storm-wrath that stilled her,
 Through thee stream.

Unfathered of heaven, frail, fearful, and lonely,
 Thou art mothered but by a maiden's sigh,
 By the maiden Athênê left loveless, left only
 To crave, and to crave, till she craved to die.
 Till the sword took the strange snaked head, with its tangled
 Bright coils, and the still eyes' freezing stare,
 And the blood welled free at last from the strangled
 Heart's despair.

Flowed free, flowed fast. Should no child inherit
 Her bitter wrongs? From the gory ground
 Immaculate, puissant, the blood of her spirit,
 Of her terrible thrallèd soul unbound,
 Thou roset, a creature of glorious fashion,
 The clear sculptured form of her shattered desire,
 Thy plumes, like her dreams, iridescent with passion,
 Opal fire.

* This expression occurs in one of Mr. Ruskin's works. I cannot now recall which; but I desire especially to acknowledge my indebtedness to the "Queen of the Air," the extent of which those alone who are students of the book can rightly measure.

Thou art free ; through the æther the sea-eagle fareth,
 But swoops with desire to the crag-cradled nest ;
 The lands of the sunset receive thee ; none shareth
 With thee the sweet violet-sown vales of the west.
 To love-sunless sojourn thy mother was fated,
 A bitterer want for thy heart-woe is come,
 Who wanderest the o'erwhelming heavens unmated,
 Loveless, dumb.

Thou knowest the track when the day is dying,
 Past the burning cliffs to the sky's pale sea,
 Whose wondrous Æolian waters are lying
 A rippleless song of deep ecstasy.
 Thou watchest the night gloom those glowing ranges,
 Dim that fair far sea ; but no tale is told ;
 Nor yet of the moonrise—its' breathlike changes
 Gold for gold.

Thou hast trembled in crash of cerulean ruin,
 Tracked the lightning's fang through the thunder-scars
 Of the storm-broken cloud ; thou hast burst the dew in
 The fine sheeted vapour, hast brushed the stars.
 To thee the lone hill-crest its heart uncloses ;
 Thou skirtest the land where the snow is born,
 And leap'st from thy couch, 'mid the ruffled roses
 Of the morn.

Yet wildly thou wanderest, a desolate creature,
 The lust of thy spirit no sun-fire stays ;
 Thou art child of her anguish whose death-fixing feature
 Corpsed the love-warm look with its hungering gaze.
 Till one shall o'ermaster thee, mate with thee, quicken,
 Thy nature will writhe in its toils ; thine the wrong
 Of the wood-warbling amorous bird that tongue-stricken
 Swells with song.

Didst thou seek one to love thee, oh, soon wert thou mated ;
 The nightingale's passion, the plaint of the dove,

. Are heard for re-echo ; to loneliness fated
 They only, they ever, who seek one to love.
 Dream deep in the star-softened cloud, none will rouse thee ;
 Plunge thy fearless flanks in the wind's wide bed,
 On the chaos-bound cliffs of Infinity browse thee,
 Heaven-bred !

Yet ne'er shalt thou rest from thy terrible yearning ;
 Though quenchless the craving, not idle the quest.
 Thirst's bitterest ravage we learn from the burning
 Wild lips to the wineless wine-cup prest.
 The secret within thee thou shalt not unravel,
 Nor thine eyes weep tears, nor sobs suck thy breath ;
 Desire pressed by dumbness to uttermost travail,
 Brings forth Death.

Ah ! thou art quieted, deep-wailing one ;
 Thy gushing waters drip in shame adown
 The rock they over-foam. There is no grief
 Like the lone Gorgon maiden's and mine own.
 Démêtêr did but teach me how to name
 The dumb thing at my heart.
 But see, I do not watch in solitude,
 Despair unmated ; yonder, hidden by
 A fortress of thick bay-leaves, stands a youth,
 So still, he seems in terror of his breath,
 His eyelids free from quiver, his fixed cheek
 Of an unchanging white. Now, suddenly,
 A glory smites him ; from the riven clouds
 Descends—he had a gold bit in his hand—
 O gods, he cannot mean such mastery !
 [*She buries her eyes ; after a pause looks up fearfully.*

Mine eyes have swooned ; yet through the eddying dark
The wrathful wings flared warring, and I caught
The glare of godlike eyes from one who rode
Supreme above the hurtling enmity.
Now I look out Peirênê is at peace ;
Her spray—a bower of sunshine in the air—
Lifts luminous its tender forestry ;
Her under waters, ravaged by the hoofs,
Shot through by the defying wings, and torn,
Murmur a little sobbingly, and seek
To calm their ripples to the soft refrain
Shivered by that unutterable cry
Perceant to heaven's vault that shook and boomed,
Thrilling through league on league, from range to range
Of shining cloud. I catch the radiant form
Emergent from the craterous hollow whence
The baffled courser strains. O Pêgasos,
Yield royally and rapture in thy lord !
Why, I would be as docile to his will,
Had his desire been toward me, I would yield
Obedience as facile as the limbs
Yield to the spirit's motion. Wouldst thou give
Him to the care of these caressing arms
(Thou never canst embrace him !), I would wind
Them softly round him, nor would rest until
That lonely face, with the tired, travelled look,
And soft impress of patience, quieting
Cries from the famished city of his heart,
Where hopes and wild desires oft threaten him
Meseems with treason, if they break not fast—

Until that weary face had put away
Its strange armed rigour, and the uncasqued brow
Grew orient with his smile. He will not come ;
He saw me not, nor can he ever love
A simple nymph, mated so royally,
And holding even now his nuptial rites
Godlike in heaven's closure. 'Tis enough—
That I have fed his Pêgasos, and smoothed
The pinions that ensky him. Come, my nymphs,
Whose white breasts glimmer through the maiden hair
Fringing the caves ye fled to in affright
When echo brought forth hundredfold the cry
From the ne'er-neighing steed. All now is still.
Sing softly with me, gentle sisterhood
Dew-footed from the deep ; and ye whose hair
Is leafy, murmur from your forest homes,
While the lone Oreads uplift the strain
Far as the lark's shaft thrills the amplitude
Of the blue void ;—yea, even up to him
Exiled in sapphire inaccessible,
Shrill-throated, bear the chorus of our song !

SCENE III.—*In the cloudlands.* BELLEROPHÔN on
PÊGASOS.

BELLEROPHÔN.

The gods have nerved my hand to conquer thee,
And filled me with a mighty love to tame

The burning hatred of thy wrestling soul
Ravished from air-wide freedom. Through the fall
Of fountainous mane that over-showers thy neck,
As wild bright spray washes the marble side
Of sacred shrine, thy wondrous eyes look back
Perplexed in broken wildness, with desire
Of love to rescue from the Helot's doom
The enforced servitude of these fleet limbs.
Be docile, and not slavish : give me love,
Thy love, thy trust, my beauteous Pasturer
Of heaven's herbless azure. All is strange
And terrible in the gigantic vales
That interpenetrate these dizzying steeps,
This awful land of forces and of forms
Man's brain must reel to think of, or achieve
Titanic bulk to measure and oppose ;
For here no voices answer to the heart ;
The heavens grow hostile, and the frightened soul
Swoons at conception of her vast desire,
As Semêlê at sight of Hêrê's lord.
Zeus fronts me not, rather I feel from him
Tartarean banishment, and human life
Seems but a chord, touching infinity
At birth and death, clasped by the awful curve
Of the unknown and untransgressable.
Thou Solitary Creature, mateless thus
Through Time's big years, how shall I comfort thee,
How give thee rest, who need'st more tenderness
To woo, than might to master? I have felt
Never till now, how terrible the tides

Of over-billowing love, and how they press
 Tumultuous on the shores of solitude,
 Spurned by flinty ledges ; but at last
 Thou hast thy listener, my Dumb Eloquence !
 Am I not thine ? Thou turnest thy bright head ;
 Thy deep, warm eyes look fondly back on me,
 And hanging round them piteous, yet sweet,
 Are human tears. With them there is a new
 Deep life born in thee that thou hast not known.
 How we have changed each other ! Ye high gods,
 That past conception's power companion me
 With this rare creature for my daily use,
 That shall familiar me with ecstasy,
 And fold in heaven's fleeces, I am lost
 In the great joy that will drink up my life
 As the air drinks the death-sigh of a man
 Beloved of Zeus. My captured, if we twain
 Hold to each other ? Drop not those bright tears,
 My yearning Silence ; we are wedded fast.

SCENE IV.—*The fountain of Peirênê.* EURUNOMÊ
weeping ; near her POLUBIOS.

POLUBIOS.

Tell me, my child, why art thou sorrowful ?

EURUNOMÊ.

Peirênê is forsaken ; the fair steed
 That we would watch together, thou and I,

When weary of my nymphs I crept alone
 To comrade thee, and often hold our breath
 For joy, when lifted in the spray his plumes
 Were barred with rainbow violet and vert,
 Or when in quiet moonlight he would drink,
 A golden bird from golden fountain-brim,
 Or float athwart the hyacinthine night
 Slowly, as hovering water-fowl at poise
 On wide-stretched and unwearable wings,
 Not white, but like the clustered Pleiades
 A cloud of stars ;—we shall keep watch no more
 Or vainly ; one hath caught and bridled him,
 Haply hath harnessed.

POLUBIOS.

Hush, Eurunomê.

If my own boy, Bellerophôn, hath caught
 And curbed the steed, this is no time for tears.
 Tell me, what hast thou seen ?

EURUNOMÊ,

A quiet youth
 Stood hidden in the bay trees—Pégasos
 Broke sudden from the clouds in swift descent :
 Soon as he skimmed the fountain, o'er his head
 Was flung a golden bridle ; then there rose
 Such wrathful clangour that I hid mine eyes,
 But when I looked again, far in the clouds
 Bellerophôn bestrid him, if indeed
 The youth be thine.

POLUBIOS.

He will return to us.

Ah ! now, Eurunomê, thy tears are dried ;
Thou art bright-cheeked, and thy heart beats to see
A hero bravely mounted.

EURUNOMÊ.

Will he come ?

Tell me, who is this stranger I should hate
For robbing me of my rare Pêgasos ?
Surely he is some god whom it is meet
To worship, for he did not anger me,
I would have seen his smile.—If there is hope
He yet will haunt Peirênê, let us watch
For him, as once we watched—I should not tire
Of waiting many summers for one smile.

POLUBIOS.

My child, he is no god, yet rightly thou
Didst worship him ; when taintless manhood shrines
Spirits of noble strain, the blessed gods
Own the immortal breed and half adore ;
A maiden well may gaze on such and deem
Apollo on his wanderings ; but, dear,
If thy divinity be the lone boy
I reared at Korinth, he will surely come
To crave my blessing, ere he bend his course
To conquer the Chimaira,—a grim beast
Doing much harm to Lykia. At last

The idle browser will be put to use,
Serving Athênê's soldier. Thou wilt see
A glorious twain. Look up, Eurunomê,
And haply win thy smile.

[BELLEROPHÔN *descends on PÉGASOS* ; EURUNOMÊ
takes the reins as he dismounts.

BELLEROPHÔN (*to EURUNOMÊ*).

He knows the hand.—

My master (*he kneels to POLUBIOS*), I am bound for
Lykia ;

Give me thy blessing.

POLUBIOS.

Nay ; I hail thee now

Full victor. Thou art lord of Pégasos.
It is a light thing on a heavenly steed
To murder an earth-monster ; yet take heed,
Let not thoughts lawless and incontinent
Slacken thy will, or to impiety
Provoke thee. Thou art thus equipped to serve
Thy fellow-men ; ask counsel constantly
Of great Athênê, who to righteous deed
Kindles and calms. I, with Peirênê's nymphs,
This their fair queen, my sweetest playfellow,
Wait thy return ; and they shall weave thee crowns
Of bay to garland thee.

BELLEROPHÔN.

Victorious !

Say, thou art well content ?

POLUBIOS.

Whom the gods love,
They tempt with heavenly lures ; therefore be keen,
Wide-eyed, and meek of purpose. Fare thee well,
My most dear warrior ; I am well content.

BELLEROPHÔN.

And but to keep that peace within thine eyes,
That praiseful gladness, I can peril all.
It is the needed omen to assure
Completest triumph. (*He mounts, taking the reins from*

EURUNOMÊ.) Ah, my pretty one,
How daintily thou hast caparisoned
My horse with flowery trappings ; in thine hand—
Nay, do not tremble—still a trail of rose
Half-chapleted ; wilt thou not garland me ?

[*He smiles on EURUNOMÊ, who timidly crowns him
with a wild rose wreath.*

Great grace is done to us, my Pêgasos !
To Lykia straight.

[*He ascends.*

SCENE V.—*In the cloudlands.* BELLEROPHÔN *on*
PÊGASOS. *The CHIMAIRA below.*

BELLEROPHÔN.

By Pêgasos' curved nostrils far below
Must rise the reeking, poisonous, swampy mass

I must unvenom ; yet from this keen air
How can I pass to the remembered stench,
How plunge my snowy courser in the smoke
Of griming breath ? Thou lucent Loveliness,
Breathe deep of thine own æther ; thou wilt need
Provision from thy heavenly pasturage
To fit thee for such labour. Through thy flanks
A quiver passes ; rest we here awhile
In this deep covert of the silver hills.
How virginal the hush of these high vales !
A very drifted snow of solitude,
Silence' unsullied white. There is no calm
In earth's environs unbesmirched by speech.
No Tempê valley so recluse, it ne'er
By traveller's footstep hath been frequented.
God for His inspiration keeps this field
A flawless azure, or it is a sea
Of sacred water for His argosies,
Whose wake no meaner craft can mutilate.
Should I not tarry till these amplitudes
Fulfil my spirit, till infinity
Becomes familiar, as Korinthan strait
Was customary to my childhood's eyes ?
What hath man been to me that I should brave
For him this bitter conflict ? Little else
Have I found in him other than I found
In the abhorred den. I asked for love ;
Anteia put such venom in that cup
As purest wine would bring remembrance of.
I asked to serve, and was made impotent

By fell Erinna. In Polubios
I built a trust most absolute ; and he
Still bids me to the battle-field.—For him
I must renounce all high delight and dream,
Devoting wings that would outstrip the speed
Of the foot-feathered god to hurry me
To the engulfing filth. I would forget
A little space my shames in Lykia.
My Pégasos, if I should give thee rein,
How rapturous would be our life ! what winds
Would quicken us to make delicious raid
'Mid the dawn's belted roses, or to skirt
The coasts of moon-ensilvered bays, or leap
In the live current of keen meteors !
Even now strange flushes cross the clouds, and all
The west grows wide for glorious pageantry ;
What more than mortal passions and desires
People the drama of the setting sun,
As if the gods would pass before our eyes
The picture-chorus of the lives we lead,
So senseless of their fine significance,
And make us ampler creatures ! for we are
Temporal merely, nor divine the power
Of spreading, till our spirit's narrow stream
Flooding, like Neilos, the unnurtured past,
Verdures it with infinitude of life,
And by the harvest of its fruitful tide
Fixes the bound of its futurity.
Man's mind hath in it strength to fertilize
Time's shrunken tracts, did it o'erbrim its banks,

But trickling on in its accustomed bed
 It bubbles intermittently. Oh, haste,
 My Pégasos ; give me the larger room
 For which I yearn. Swift to yon emerald sea
 With its pure opal coasts, and purple lands
 Of dusking loveliness. Yet stay ; there pass
 'Thwart the dim clouds where I am pausing, two
 With beamy faces, brows star-filleted,
 And twilight chlamus wrapping them in shroud.
 They are Athênê's handmaids. I have heard
 Oft how for her they gather heaven's dews,
 And, turning earthward, do not cease from toil
 Till, from the lofty plane-tree to the low
 Curled parsley leaves, all creatures drink their fill,
 And the moon rises on a world renewed.
 Sweet-handed sisters ! Surely from their lips
 A lyre-like breath is wafted ; yet they touch
 Silence so tenderly, she doth not rouse,
 Smiling responsive through unwakened sleep.

SONG OF DEW-MAIDENS.

HERSÊ.

My feet, sunk deep in cloud as soft
 As dovelet's under-feathers, dread
 The plough-land's roughened plain,
 The shrivelled vineyard-slopes to tread ;
 To leave the fostering sky aloft,
 The snow-soft bowers of rain,
 For earth's sun-fevered fields and thoroughfares of pain.

BELLEROPHON.

PANDROSOS.

Yet let them sink
Through the keen air whose kisses
Are kind, if kindly taken ;
When heaven is forsaken
We shall find other blisses
On heaven's brink.

HERSÈ.

Mine eyes are full of the large sky :
How can they love the heaven bound
In the small violet's bloom ?
How can enough for them be found
In a flower's tiny charact'ry
Of the vast land with room
For spring's faint azure smile and autumn's glowing gloom ?

PANDROSOS.

Yet bend them down,
From the great sky above thee
To the poor earth that's wearing
The garment of despairing :
Then will thy vast sky love thee ;
Yea, bend them down.

HERSÈ.

My heart feeds where the sun-fields glow
For harvesting of God's own arm ;
Where for ingarnering night
Ripe momentarily gold-breadths of calm ;
And earth's pale-crested cornlands show
In the gray underlight
Cold as the dead white moon, the dayspring in my sight.

PANDROSOS.

Yet let it turn
Earthward, where drought is creeping,
Where breastless Famine rises,
And the parched cornfields prizes
For her dread grainless reaping ;
There let it turn.

HERSÉ.

My spirit trembles with desire
Towards those sea-stretches clear and large,
'Mid the cloud-coasts, whose foam
Against the sombre beach's marge
Surges a scintillating fire.
Earth's twilights, can I roam
Far from the crystal deeps where my desire hath home ?

PANDROSOS.

Yea, lay it down ;
Let earth's faint cry distress thee,
And turn thy dreamy craving
Into deep need of saving :
The freshened rose will bless thee ;
Yea, lay it down.

Athênê, not in vain have thy sweet maids
Passed, silver-lipped, beside me. Pêgasos,
Let the great sun commend our victory.
He tarries for our triumph ; there is time
For the goal-winning and the wreath of rays.

[*He descends to CHIMAIRA'S lair.*

SCENE VI.—*The palace of Lykia.* IOBATES, ERINNA,
PHÊMÊ, and Soldiers.

ERINNA.

What sets a watchfulness within thine eyes,
Iobates? And wherefore dost thou gaze
At yonder open portal breathlessly,
As warder gazes where a mounted form
Bears menace o'er the broad horizon-line,
Thy glance transfixed, not by the darts of thought,
But held by fear, that tempts my mockery,
Seeing no "Io Paian," such as smote
The ears of lone Akrisios with dread,
Can rouse thee, Fate's aghasted sentinel,
While I sit by thee childless; and no stir
Of insurrection reach thee, while thy guard
Grasp ready spears? Trembling with stronger thrill?
Make me a partner of thy terror, King!

IOBATES.

Erinna, see that form that creeps behind
The furthest troop, like a white wreath of mist
Behind a mountain peak! 'Tis gone! Again
I see its boding whiteness; this is strange!
I saw it enter by yon fronting gate
Behind a soldier, making of his back
A shield, and stealing onward like a thief;
A woman phantom, growing with each step

So that a moment's travel multiplies
 To years its stature's vast development.
 Behold its wings that spread from small to great
 As eaglet's to the eagle's, terrible
 In their bright mail of myriad busy eyes
 Fearfully vivid with malignant life ;
 And ever and anon the sharp plumes dull
 To flamy brown of bronze, or cloud to black,
 Or flare to meteor-scarlet, as it turns
 Now here, now there, now to this man, now that.
 Eyes stud its very breasts ; its ears are wide
 As bat's, and ever outward turned ; it spoke
 At first with one, but as its tidings grew
 An hundred mouths sprang forth, as, to emit
 The wind of prophecy, an hundred gates
 Unfold in caverns Sybilline. At first
 Its voice was like the hiss of trodden snake,
 But even that grows to a lion's roar.
 And look upon the faces of our men
 With whom it tampers : one laughs openly,
 One seams his brow, one hangs about his lips
 An acrimonious smile ; one starts, one shakes
 A doubtful head, and one astonied stands.
 The phantom stalks defiant to our throne ;
 It cannot greater grow ; and now it lifts
 A clinquant trumpet, double-orifaced.
 'Tis here !—Ill-omened being, who art thou ?

PHÈMÈ.

Erratic child of staid Aletheia,

Aletheia who stooped her noble pride
And virtue most severe to love the god
Of red-ripe grapes and reeling brain and limbs,
Fantastic Dionusos. 'Neath a vine
In secret haunt she bore me ; and there meet
In me my sire and mother, as before
Never in any offspring ; perilous
The nuptials, doubly perilous the birth
That crowns them—I that child omnipotent.

ERINNA.

Art thou a woman, vast and awful shape ?

PHÈMÈ.

Ay, Queen, a woman ; seest thou not my breasts ?
And, strange to tell, the only woman I
Who loves my sex, and counts it not as cheap
Beside the stronger. Women are to me
Trumpets of flesh : I am their prophet, seer ;
I love them as a king his courtiers loves.
I fill their ears, I tip their tongues ;—O Queen,
I love them more than miser loves his gold.

IOBATES.

What dost thou here, she-trumpeter ? tell that !

PHÈMÈ.

Most curious monarch, as a Bacchanal
I've roamed thy city : all thy people know
That which thou knowest not, retired so far

From the great throng now wholly subjugate
To my wild will ; thy kingdom is my own,
And now I dare to stand before thy throne
And blow my trumpet in thy face, O King !

IOBATES.

What is thy message ? Let thy crowded mouths
Bellow it forth. I tremble and attend.

PHÊMÊ.

He, the brave youth, thou gavest to the jaws
And fangs of black Chimaira (and my tales
I have of that) has slain the sulphurous pest.
Like a huge refuse-heap its festering stench
Of sword-sluiced foulness fevers the pure air
Twelve leagues away, and the whole vale is grown
A pestilent marsh of rotting flesh. In truth
He fought it not on foot as others have,
But smote it from the back of a winged beast,
Half bird, half horse, unutterably white.
This is my news, O King ! Yea, lift thy hair,
Ruddy thy hands with thy infuriate nails,
And roll ensanguined eyeballs ; this my news !

IOBATES.

Curse Heaven ! I am undone ! Detested shape,
Mock me no more with all thy gleaming eyes,
And brandish not thy clarion in my face !
Gods ! she is busy with my men again.

ERINNA.

Silence ! Amaze but hinders her arrest.
My brain is busy like a straw-hid hive
With sudden action. Stop yon gadding form
Fearless, for suddenness will do what thought
Is but a child at. Cause it to be bound.

IOBATES.

Guards, bind her, bind the hag ; and stop her mouths,
Until she burst with her repressed news.
Immure her deep in chinkless dungeons, safe
As Aitnê's roots, and bind her down with chains
Infrangible, strong-locked as those that bind
Hell's watch-dogs to the threatening doors of hell.
Thy hands are gyved—soon will thy mouths be stopped ;
What final imprecation wilt thou choose
Ere the gag station thy convulsive lips
Twin jailers to thy tongue ? Ay, writhe and curse ;
It pleasures me to see thy swelling cheeks.
Guards, do not spare ; sew the revolting lips
As gaping wounds together ; but the tongues—
Save those ; she would not suffer so, deprived
The means of speech. Let her rage, impotent.

PHÊMÊ.

Yea, for a little thou canst stifle me.
I have known prison, torture, and through deaths
Innumerable passed unhurt ; but try
My life, and you release me ; and this gag

Frees all the baffled forces of my brain
 To the one toil of swift deliverance.
 I will outwit thee, vex thee, and forestall,
 Harass thy slumber, fret thy waking hours,
 Even undermine thy kingdom, while I lie
 A bound corpse in thy dungeon. For the rest—
[She is gagged and led off.]

ERINNA (*to IOBATES*).

Not pale again? So easily befooled!
 What though our prisoner spake truth—indeed
 Report is only truth infuriate—
 Curse not her message, but rejoice in it,
 Is it no triumph to entoil the prey
 Chimaira blunderingly let slip, beguile
 The pious victor, have him dragged in chains
 To our throne's footstep, and there suffer him.
 Writhe for our pastime, till he supplicate
 For death? And we will bid him wait, and lay
 Dainties about him, fruit and cooling drinks,
 And chaplet him with flowers, for he shall be
 Our special victim. Now thou laughest! Learn
 How I will take him. Thou rememberest
 Beyond the city-walls a horrid wood
 Manes darkly the brown plain, and many a pit
 With underwood intricate hides its lips
 As in a shaggy beard. There let the best
 Of my armed Lykians wait him secretly.
 On his return he needs must pass through it
 To reach the coast-road for Korinthos, where

Lives the great seer he breathlessly will seek
For praise of his fair feat ; our messengers
Will serve him with a litter. This is mirth !

IOBATES.

Think'st thou, Erinna, I can trust my men ?
If so, thy plan is to my soul as blood
To dumb lips of the dead.

ERINNA.

Leave that to me.

ACT IV.

OLUMPOS.

SCENE I.—*A wood in Lykia. BELLEROPHON is discovered wounded on the ground ; several corpses lie near.*

BELLEROPHON.

How strange the solitude 'mid these gashed heaps,
This loneliness won by my sword, that dumb'd
The treacherous rabble loosed upon my life
By Lykia's lynx-eyed monarch ! I keep watch
Above them, calm as yonder oak that spreads
Toward them her rooty arms, craving their gore
As the thief's hand craves gold. And is it thus
That I can look on man ? Why, a mere slave
Flung on the highway in death's livery
Grew sacred in the dread habiliments
Of a mysterious royalty ; and now
I gaze an alien on my mangled kind.
Like a dead child in living womb my heart
Is cold within my breast. If I am born
To purge the earth, I must depopulate
Her cities, I who dreamt, Chimaira slain

And the foul valley swept with cleansing winds,
The power of evil broken in the world.
That one triumphant moment ! While the fight
Was raging heaven itself loured sulphurous,
But with the victory the sun came forth
And the baulked clouds crouched on the southern verge
Like wild beasts scared by torchlight from their prey.
Illusive was the happy augury !
I am defeated in a deadlier sort,
A shame more ineffaceable is fixed
Upon me than my flesh had felt from fang
Of the vile thing that now innocuous
Fills the entombing gorge ; for I am duped
Of the high gods who show my earnest hours
Richer in folly than sheer idleness.
All I have done is useless as the sand
That chronicles its dropping through the glass
But registers no deed : my labour turns
Back on itself ; the world is where it was
Before Bellerophôn would make it wise,
Striving to bleach what God once made so white
That man has so bedarkened. Then is youth
But given to teach that hope is treacherous,
That man's best friend will offer him sweet wine
And squeeze the poison in it, or will lead
His grass-eased feet over the wide abyss ?
It needs youth's innocence to work the pain
Of manhood's ruined hopes : they tempt to sea
Who gloat upon the shipwreck. Oh, I sailed
Bravely with favouring breeze, and now am borne

Straight to the foundering rocks ; yet not to sink
Swiftly as diving bird to the abyss,
But on the waves that I was wont to ride,
A floating spar contemptuously tossed,
To make unsightly strewage. All is gone
Now my great aim is shattered,—precious vase
That held within its pure and polished curve
The globèd sweetness of the grapes of life.
Man cannot be redeemed, and the high powers,
Abhorrent of the human brood, but feign
Their own heroic progeny to bless,
That they may see in little their despair
Repeated, and despise the ancient grief
That wrung Olumpos, ere to irony
Their burning baffled amorousness was dwarfed.
What failure like the failure to find love
Where if it grow not the whole world is doomed
To everlasting dearth. The gods must love
Or lose mankind : the mother weans the babe
Gently from her own breast ; if Heaven thus
Close her warm bosom from the spirit's need,
Her nursling perishes ; she cannot quench
Its thirst save from the well-springs of its life,
Or teach it other longing. Once I dreamed
Life was an arduous problem at whose end
Solution lay I was as sure to reach
As finally to touch yon purple peak,
Where quiet night foots the horizon line.
But as I travelled on longer the way,
As if the earth had growth, and further still

The ever-heightening summit, till at last
A bridgeless chasm fronts me, and my goal
Fades in the blue obliterate. Can man
Leap from the ledge of this stupendous cliff,
And reach across the fordless air between
The cliff it faces, without plunging first
In the black waters that deep down divide?
I am too weak for such a mighty spring;
And well I know that heaven's stern repulse,
Like mountain hurled on Cœus and his crew
From thunder-thongèd sling, would be the doom
Of my sky-sieging spirit! Scorned of Zeus,
Shall I forsake my vigil of the clouds
Again to succour man, whom I have found
So thankless, selfish, and indifferent?
Never! I loosed my Beautiful, as soon
As he had given me victory, to soar
Awhile amid the heavens riderless,
Scorning to use him as a common steed,
And, as a mortal traveller, took route
To Lykia's coasts. I will tread earth no more,
I will recapture him my Pégasos—
One yearning sigh will bring him—and we'll speed
Past thousand girths of far horizon lines,
Untrammelled by the chains of brotherhood
With this low race; and I will give him rein
To dive into the sunset, dripping gold
From flank and nostrils, showering from his mane
Such fulgence as would flower the mines of earth
Till they outshone the sun-fields. Thus I'll grow

The wings of demi-godhood. Mine shall be
Endless divorcement from all human ties.

[HERSÊ and PANDROSOS *pass by*.

HERSÊ.

Sister, where dost thou stray?
Light is failing,
Night is veiling
All in drowsy folds of gray;
And the day
Like white Persephonê is borne to Dis away.

PANDROSOS.

The wet red roses tell,
In their sleeping
Gently keeping
Sphered drops, wherever fell
The rich spell
Of feet whose freshening soles are dipped in heaven's well.

HERSÊ.

The tall brown corn in sleep
Bowing hoary
Tells our story,
How the owl-winged hours we keep;
How we reap
Unseen and unguessed joy in silent darkness deep.

PANDROSOS.

Let us not pause, but go
Ever fleeter;
For 'tis sweeter
All to do when none can know,
Than to show
Our gracious silent deeds to light's revealing glow.
[*They pass out of sight.*

Ah, earthward now ! they passed me in the clouds
But yester-eve ; this time they saw me not,
Although their trailing garments wellnigh touched
My havoc's crimson edges, nor beheld
How the wide sprinkling of their hands had washed
Each smeared corpse ; but chiefly this fair face—
The boy's who 'neath the spear-point told me all—
They have left wet and glistening, half cleansed
From the red drops I dashed across the brow,
So soon our purpose crosses !—Thou wert frank,
Poor stripling, whom I found still breathing hard
After the bloody chaos, and prepared
Straight for the pang of the descending knife.
How garrulously didst thou blab the guile,
The ambushed vileness of that wretched crew
My sinews, strung for the terrific strife,
Turned their tense energy to grapple with
And were not overmatched. Well, for reward
Of thy young candour I secured thy lips
From any taint of falsehood, and made stiff
The tongue that surely would have learnt its trade
With time to whet its cunning. Oh, to lie
Like thee, unsullied and unsickened—*dead !*
As aching mother by her soothed babe
I watch thy slumber—I, who cannot sleep !

SCENE II.—*A room in the palace of Argos.* ANTEIA ;
IPHIMEDÊ.

ANTEIA.

Iphimedê,
Bring me the girdle that I wore the day
Thy master wedded me.

IPHIMEDÊ.

Sweet Queen, the thing
Is old and soiled, too slight to bind thy waist ;
And even in thy lovely bridal-hood
The clasp ill suited thee,—so fair a form,
Zoned with an argent twist of sleeping snakes——

ANTEIA.

Sleeping !

IPHIMEDÊ.

Besides, I know not where it lies,
Locked in some coffer whose intreasuring bolt
Dust hath encumbered, and dark spider dulled
With sullen white : perchance the thing is lost.

ANTEIA.

Iphimedê, I aye have mistressed thee
Gently, as captive, motherless, estranged
From thine own people ; and in tender mood

Have suffered thee to trifle with my will.
 To-day one word of opposition dooms,
 One hint of failure will infuriate
 Me to that passion that thou knowest once
 Fell not, till every slave that tended me
 Was put to cunning torture, and made still,
 When the shrieks wearied me, with tongueless death.
 Bring me the belt straightway.

IPHIMEDÊ.

If it be lost?

ANTEIA.

Thy life is lost : obey !

IPHIMEDÊ.

Indeed, dear Queen,

I— Oh, forgive me !

ANTEIA.

Drop another tear
 And the offending sluices shall be dammed.
 Poor fool to weep at words ! (IPHIMEDÊ *retires.*) So
 she is gone
 To trick me for Death's banquet !

IPHIMEDÊ (*looking back*).

 Ay, she looks
 Dreadful, but all too deadly sick to kill,
 Pale as my mother in the agony

Just ere the death-swoon at my sister's birth.
If I can humour her—

[*Exit.*

ANTEIA.

To weep at words !

Yet there are words to make one weep hot blood.
What hurt, my proud Bellerophôn, from thee
Have I received, but thy tongue's uttermost ?
It goads me like the gad-fly's rankling bite,
That spurning anger, worse than open taunt.
I cannot be the thing that makes his mock,
Nor longer writhe in his reproach. He lives ;—
Has slain Chimaira ! I had wept for him
Had he been slain, had half repented me,
Nay, but he lives, has foiled me in my hate
As in my feller love.—There is no way
Of vengeance, but to give him biting news,
And spoil his triumph with Anteia's death,—
Anteia, taught of him to hate her lord
With loathing that the poison-cup relieved !
Yet have I finer spite ;—the zone that bound
My waist when I was bound to my dear lord
Shall have a narrower girth, and bind my neck.
The day that looses me from servitude
To his detested love, divorces me
From marriage bonds that gride my very soul.
I go to Death, and not to him I love,
Whose scorning glances do but tread me down
Like victor's feet.—I leave him to his life ;
Death-guarded separation is divorce

From love as well as hatred. Lone will be
My life ; as whitest virgin's and unsucked
My childless breasts in the great solitude
Of the empurpled land of silent Death.
He said that I was beautiful, yet spurned
The beauty which like golden coins I heaped
Before his feet, till, with rejection mad,
I strove to scorn his chasteness ; but it grew,
The more I would deface, more sacred fair
As marble statue that one dares not mar
It looks so worshipful. Now he is gone
My pride forsakes me, as a guardian god
Forsaking the black hearth, his burning home.
Thrice fool to break beguiling silence, for
He worshipped *mè* another's, but when his
He cast me down as priest the unhallowed parts
Of sacrifice, God's shrine repudiates.
Would he were here, deceived and mine ! I'd live,—
Sweep the unsilvered gold of my thick hair
Across Death's eyes to keep his hungry face
From preying near me ; and once more resign
My soul to the celestial eloquence
Of those fond guileless eyes, that smile that grew
Blushful with rapture, as a child is flushed
At sight of pleasure that outgilds its dream.
Bellerophôn, I cannot be as vile
As thou wouldst have me, still to love thee thus,
Ay, only thus to love thee. Hadst thou fall'n
All my great yearning would have gone from thee,—
That yearning that is strengthened to desire

Of Death instead of thee. Strange that we take,
 We broken-hearted, death instead of love :
 Are they so like, so comparable to put
 Life's irremediable pang to sleep ?
 They are strong potions both ; the purple-brimmed
 Was dashed against my lips ; there is no choice ;
 And I have hope of thee in Tártaros :
 Thou art too wilful for the gods, too set
 On high Titanic labour to escape
 Terrific downfall. Thou wilt never be
 Among those happy ones who purify
 Themselves to finer clearness, as with age
 The sombre-coated cygnet grows to swan.
 But mournfully thy life will fade from all
 Its early light ; the gods will orphan thee,
 Thou grand undocile, impious, exigent,
 And when none pity thee, thou wilt be moved
 To a remorseful pity of thyself.
 Thou art too nice for man ; too apt to charge
 High heaven with negligence, to find the fields
 Of asphodel, where humbler souls, content
 To live the careless playthings of the gods,
 Have peaceful pasture. So strong hope of thee
 I have in hell, my feebleness finds force
 To gird itself with (*movement without*) the strange serpent
 clasp
 Which she has found. I hear her coming step.
 Quick, to unclasp this chain of pearls, for here
 Must press the band that wrings the wretched life
 From this fair form. Iphimédé !

Enter PROITOS.

My lord,

What is thy will ?

PROITOS.

All at the feast desire,

I most, thy presence ; but thou art not well
Thy maidens say. Strain not thy will in this.

ANTEIA.

It is most true, I am not well, my lord ;
I brood too much upon my late disgrace.
I have no will as yet to show myself.

PROITOS.

It is enough, Anteia. But thy grief,
That works such ravage on thy loveliness,
Weeps but the phantom of a wrong. My queen,
Thou art all honoured, pitied, and beloved
Within our realm, and no envenomed tongue
Dares slime thy reputation, or imply
Shame near my sharèd throne, lest my own hand
Stop the foul exit from the traitor's jaws.
Our marriage-day has sadly passed.

ANTEIA.

My lord,

I will attend thee, if thy pleasure lies
That way, but I am ill and like to faint.

PROITOS.

Nay, thou shalt rest and charm thy beauty back.
 The feasters call me to the festal board,
 Where in strong wine we'll pledge thee ; nor shall fail
 For thy recovery the votive gift
 To sage Askîepios. Farewell, my queen. [Exit.

ANTEIA.

Farewell—deluded fool ! Thou shalt be shamed
 In an hour's time, by knowledge that thy love
 Is death to a fair woman ; for the man
 A woman dies to escape is hissed through life,
 A mock to all the world.—O mighty Death,
 How common life, like rocks beneath the tide,
 Frets even the edge of thy sublimity !

Enter IPHIMEDÊ.

Slave, hast thou got the band ?

IPHIMEDÊ.

I have, dear queen ;
 But see how faded is the woven silk.

ANTEIA.

Faded ! That's well !

IPHIMEDÊ.

But look upon its clasp.

ANTEIA.

A bright rust, red as is thy master's hair ;
I like the colour.

IPHIMEDÊ.

Wear it not to-day !

ANTEIA.

Leave me, Iphimedê, I long to rest
In quietness ; but take this chain of pearls,
Reward for thy long search.

IPHIMEDÊ.

Too rich a gift
It seems to me. Oh, what a lovely string !
My thanks, dear queen. Here is a pillow placed
Upon thy couch. Now, shall I leave thy side ?

ANTEIA.

Yes, go and tell thy fellows that I sleep.

IPHIMEDÊ.

And count my pearls !

[*Exit.*

ANTEIA.

Here is the girdle, here
My neck. How sweet the little pressure is !
Will the last wring be sweeter ? Oh, by far ;
Bellerophôn has wearied so my life !

My hero, colder than Caucasian snow,
 Killing with purity, I feel we twain
 In the great land of punishment below
 Shall meet. I feel it gloriously. Long, long
 Shall I lie waiting, but not wait in vain.
 Is age in Hadès' realm? Shall I be gray?
 Or shall I look as in a short hour hence?
 If Proitos see me ugly and distort
 I could rejoice in death. But he, my own,
 Shall never think of me but beautiful.
 Mine! he was never mine. Love, cruel Love,
 Like eagle caged and famished by its lord,
 Thy power hath bound me, and thy empty hand
 Would doom me to starvation: but I die!
 Behind yon muffling curtain is the place.
 I move as fearless to my fearful death
 As to my bath. We meet, Bellerophôn!
 [*Exit behind the curtain.*]

SCENE III.—BELLEROPHÔN *is discovered on the slopes of
 Mount Tauros, PEGASOS by his side. Time: moonlight.*

BELLEROPHÔN.

I am a conqueror, and what remains?
 Is Lykia delivered? Lykia's king
 Is but arch-traitor of a traitorous horde,
 And the Chimaira in the heart of man
 Grows lusty as a worm on luscious fruit.

They who would save but bring forth stronger sin
In those they fail to save : no fostering air
For wickedness, like that the tainted breathe
From holy lips and perish not ; unless
One's purity is mortal to disease,
It is itself infected, and will feed
Contagiously the ill it feigns to cure.
Iobates, Anteia, I have laid
The corner-stone of their great wickedness,
And of all evil in the lives of all
I struggled to redeem. And yet my love
Broods passionate o'er earth's abhorred race ;
And Pégasos I never held so dear,
As when his downward flight directed me
In shaft-like swiftness to the fatal pierce
Of the thick-hided throat. My Pégasos,
What shall we further do ? Oh, when I look
On thee, thou Flower of Night, thou Fulgent Crest
Of these dark-folded hills,—thy fleeces white
With all the myriad whiteness of the moon,
And o'er thy head the moon's great burial-pile—
A mound of swelling thunder-clouds, begloomed
To densest dark above the golden grave,
Then smouldering into sombre tawny heaps,
Empurpled passes auric-runleted,
While the great clouds of the enthronement wait
In snowy troops the bright queen's issuing ;
And tiny wind-drifts, coral-tinted, flush
Thorough the shining calm :—while thou art thus,
My Beautiful, bright in thine own bright land,

Almost I long to loose thee from my rein,
 And yield thee to the rapture of the night.
 When it is well, is it not well to part,
 Ere we be torn asunder, and so die ?
 Thy fair sails spread not ; fondly as of old
 Thou lookest back on me ; oh, that I might
 Be borne through thy mute countries wheresoe'er
 Thou wouldest, till the earth were but a star ;
 And we in linkèd silence should attain
 The solemn permanence, the solitude
 That should make thought eternal.* Fitfully
 The night wind murmurs, and I hear the cry
 Of some en-eyried thing. These human ears,
 While they have power to listen, will be still
 Portals of human misery and cares ;
 And when they listen not, life grows forlorn,
 And they as unused gateways desolate.
 The power to be importuned is a power
 That makes us like the gods, and if we wrap
 Ourselves in our own dreams, we are as dull
 As were Olumpus, if no suppliant
 Prayed to Apollo for his twanging bow
 Or hurried Hêrê's coursers from their stall.
 I, with the freedom of the skies, must build
 My spirit's home and happiness 'mong men.
 To fly from them is exile, and to rest
 Amid them agony. How fast a hold
 Has this black tarn of yonder trembling star ;
 How safely it imprisons the divine,

* From Senancour's "Obermann."

Owning all heaven in its stained glass !
Might I in human bosoms thus embed
The sky's unrifled riches ? See, the moon
Fades slowly in the dawnlight, and the pool
Lies sullen 'mid the softly graying steeps.
Not to a momentary reflex may
Man trust, but to an inward energy
Kindling, transforming his enfeebled heart.
Oh to arouse the gods from apathy !
Contemptuous drowsiness possesses them,
And man's belittled life scarce moves the scorn
Of bosoms that its majesty made glow,
Or wrathfully, or with superb content.
Yet needly must I trace about mankind
Marks of a masterpiece that, unashamed
Of his own craft, Zeus might contemplate ;—now
It lies in torsoed ruin !—Piteous
To any wanderer 'mid the broken forms
The lovely breast-swell of the headless trunk,
The falling vesture pliant to the pant
Of the soft breathing side and slumb'rously
Swathing the wearied limbs ; but where the brow
Should crown the perfect image of repose,
The mutilate jagged column of the neck !
The hero's fistless arms, the majesty
Of some grand couchant royalty, profaned
By lack of the foot's pedestal, provoke
The gods to irony of their own art,—
A most unsightly wreck, a travesty
Not to be borne. They will not touch the stones,

Those thwarted sculptors of the universe,
 And man can only wonder and lament,
 Piecing a little fragment here and there,
 But impotent with chisel to conclude
 The interrupted dream, to carve a block
 Meet for conjuncture with the grand essays,
 Half-shattered, of benign omnipotence.
 Oh to provoke these languid Potencies
 To reconstructive toil : be this my task.
 I feel humanity about my knees,
 Claspings them suppliant. I will dare all.
 God's face may be my pyre ; but I will learn
 If there be any care for mortal things
 In the high halls of Zeus.
 This lurking fear that Heaven lacks seriousness
 In human dealing makes me sick of heart.
 For if they are not earnest, the great powers
 That shape and guide us, who can be devout ?
 Devoutness is the laying of our frail
 Loose wills and languid energies for girth
 Of a god's binding hand ; firm be the grasp
 Of the securing strength ! It fails me, *fails !*
 Athênê hath forsaken me ; she flames
 Her warriors' shields with radiance ; not on mine
 Abides the happy benison. Those great
 Wide eyes as keen for sight of nascent sin
 As the owl's scent for death's putridity,
 While yet disease pales not the rosy blood,
 Have they beheld in me some secret spot
 That doth make adverse all their helpful power ?

The favour of her countenance is gone,
I feel it, and her hate implacable.
Yet it may be,
Unknown to the Supreme, she persecutes,
Perplexes, tortures me. I will ride straight
Thorough the blue to the broad halls of Zeus,
Imperious for aid.

Break, thou chill dawn ; and, lingering Cynthia, shed
Thy last sick languorous beams, that do but cast
Despair ineffable athwart the hills.

The east is sunless ; but a keener fire,
My Pégasos, shall warm us, than is brimmed
From the o'erflashing goblet of the sun.

[BELLEROPHON *mounts PEGASOS, who plunges and
disobeys the rein.*

What ! restive, angry ? I have never urged
Or menaced thee :—a look, and thou wert far ;
A word, and I must slack thee for the goal.
Thou didst forestall command, who now dost chafe
At my firm will. What ! must I use the lash
And goad thee as thou wert a common steed ?
Thy stubbornness doth put me to the shame
Of such a thought. And yet thou quiverest so,
I must be gentle with thee ; haply thou
Recoil'st from some strong dread, art wild with fear,
Not fretful at the rein. Trust all to me,
My own fine-tempered Pégasos. The light
Is warm ; the path through heaven's blue waste is clear
From the round boulders of the rolling clouds.
Our way is unimpeded. Bear me fast,
Wind of White Feathers, to the realms on high !

SCENE V.—*Mount Tauros, near the sources of the Xanthos. BELLEROPHON is discovered lying blinded and hurt near the stream.*

BELLEROPHÔN.

Is this Peirênê? Oh, I think my tears
Must weep me back to sight, break the strong rock
Of this firm-welded darkness, and enforce
A way to the sweet air and amplitude
Of heaven. Confine me not in these thick walls
Of darkness fetched from Hadês for my doom,
Ye blessed gods! Punish me otherwise.
I could bear banishment from earth, but think
To what wide worlds ye have accustomed me;
Ye have withheld from me no starry nook,
Covert of lullèd winds, or desert stretch
Of burning æther sanded by the sun.
And more, ye gave me for my play-fellow,
The horizon-sweeping, the cloud-roosting Bird
To scour these wilds, immortal Pêgasos!
I was not dazzled, nor confounded; from
Such liberty to this close-girding gloom—
Leaving me not a little light to breathe—
It cannot be that ye condemn me. Pray,
Athênê, my own mistress, that mine eyes
Be opened—I will bear all else. I call
On thee, my goddess; thou wilt intercede
With Zeus, wilt heal me of his scorching hurt.
No offering can I kill for thee, but come;

My supplicating hands grope for thy knees,
My eyes feel after thy clear-lighted orbs,
Illumine me.

ATHÊNÊ.

Bellerophôn, I stand
Beside thee : thou wilt see me nevermore.
Nor would my scorn of thee suffer me leave
The heaven thou didst assail, did not its lord
Bid me confirm his curse with bitter doom.
Blind shalt thou wander, with the lightning's lash
Athwart thy brow, for men to tremble at
And fear the gods, while they make sport of thee,
Thou poor, presumptuous, heaven-derided fool,
What laughter thou wert for us, did not shame
Of such an impious mortal spoil our mirth.

BELLEROPHON.

Athênê, if thou mock me with thy voice
Thou wilt outscathe the lightning. I have fallen,
Am foolish, who was docile once and dear
To thee, thy most dear soldier ; there remains—

ATHÊNÊ.

Reward for thy fine soldiership ; without
Counsel of me thou dared'st high enterprise ;
And, failing clumsily, wrecked impotent,
Lookest to me for aid : but long withdrawn
From thee hath been my deed-empowering light.
Whom my love guides not, my hostility

Doth mightily beguile and ruinate ;
 And from the day thou fought'st without my shield
 My dark-fringed aegis covered thee in doom.
 Not light hath been my labour to provoke
 Thee to thy life's consummate folly ! Snared
 At last——

BELLEROPHON.

Yea, taken in thy toils I stand.
 What wilt thou with me ? Thou hast thy revenge ;
 Thy dark-fringed aegis covers me with doom ;—
 Wilt thou not ever lift it ? Dark, dark, dark,
 No respite ? Pégasos will neigh in vain
 For his lost master : let me only dream
 I see him—see the bright Flash in the clouds,
 The splendid Fleetness, the white-crested Wave,
 White on the coasts of heaven,—my comrade steed,—
 Athênê, loose me to him or I die.

ATHÊNÊ.

He hath deserted thee ; he owns no hand
 Rebellious to the gods. For thine own self,
 Thou art benighted utterly ; no beam
 Hath ever slipped through the thick Erebos
 With which I compass thee ; inviolate night
 Hath thee in hold ; thou art for ever dark.

BELLEROPHON,

Child of the Dawning—

ATHÊNÊ.

Dark, dark, ever dark !

Why, I could yet be happy with her hands'
 Still warmth to steal a secret summer touch
 Through my closed spirit's wintry passages.
 I could tell all my fall to her; for she
 Would only think upon the hurt.—Poor child,
 Blinded the happy way through innocence!—
 Or, if instinctively she felt my shame,
 Deal with me tenderly as washing wave
 With the unsightly refuse of the shore
 When coveringly it gathers it, and spreads
 O'er its pollution the surf's foamy fringe.
 A face so gentle doth outspeed the growth
 Of tardy friendship, rip'ning sudden faith.
 Yet have I thought not of her since she held
 My rein, two sunlights back. There is a stir—
 A plunging through the water-reeds. Oh, say,
 Eurynomê, is this Peirênê?

POLUBIOS (*advancing*).

Who

Art thou, thou cripple-eyed and cowering thing?
 I thought to ask thee for a youth, whom I
 Am seeking, conqueror of Chimaira, still,
 So say the Lykian peasants, to be seen
 Bright with his own bright steed among the hills,
 A joy to the poor herdsmen. Though thine eyes
 Are barriered from that gracious sight, and scarred
 As with a thunder-blow, yet haply thou
 Hast heard of my Bellerophôn, or heard
 What mine ears long have hungered for, his voice;

Tell me, what tidings have illumed thy dark,
And after, how it fell?

[BELLEROPHÔN *struggles vainly to speak, then shows*
POLUBIOS *the rein.*

POLUBIOS.

Mine ears await
The history mine eyes refuse to read
Though plainly thou dost offer it ; I choose
To wrench confession from thy guilty tongue,
And thus secure self-ministry in pain.
Although it cost thee more than to lay bare
Thy throat for sacrificial knife, be frank ;
My patience will outlast thy reticence.
Something thou wouldst disburthen ; I will keep
Peace from thee jealously as from the sick
The nurse shrouds sunlight, till thine evil deeds'
Full tally lies before me.

BELLEROPHÔN.

To obey,
My master, is so grown my spirit's wont,
That though it is more bitter for my tongue
To strive for use than for my blinded eyes
To strive after their banished sense, I speak ;
The voice Bellerophôn's, the broken rein
All that remains to him of Pêgasos,
Deserted to the gods—

POLUBIOS.

As from them thou !

Commended to Athênê by my prayers,
And love so passionate, that whether thou
Wert dearer to me for my goddess' sake,
Or I adored her wholly as the aid
Of my young soldier, my soul feared to ask,
For what disloyalty to my dread queen
Art thou thus crippled? thine offence I judge
By her derision. She hath dealt with thee—

BELLEROPHÔN.

With ravening anger. Now my tongue is loosed
To curse her, I am cured of stammering.
I trusted her, Polubios, and she
Left me to work my ruin, let me ride
Reckless to heaven, was tender to her prey,
Ere the enmeshing net was duly stretched,
Remorseless to the victim in its toils.
Some lawless god I will infuriate,
Who will bring on her shame, and such remorse
As she will hide in Hadês, till from Dîs
The proud Persephonê shall banish her,
And she shall wander on the earth the scorn
Of buzzing mortals, who remember her
The maid invincible. Oh, I am mad!
She lives in flawless honour past assail,
In righteousness that cannot swerve, in calm
As safe as heaven's repose from the poor beat
Of a bird's angry wings. I rode to learn
If there were any care for human things
In the broad halls of Zeus, I rode to rouse

The gods from apathy ; imperious
 I rode.—Sudden the fronting air
 Stiffened as limpid water into ice ;
 Before me all was hard impediment,
 I was resisted, frightened, overthrown,
 That is my latest memory ; I am here,
 And here Athênê, to confirm her curse,
 Hath stripped the rimmed horizon from my night
 And built so close the massy dark, I seem
 Midmost of dungeon vapours. Let me try
 Hadês' wan light, it will afflict me less !
 Polubios, as thou dost truly loathe,
 Rid thyself of me ; give my lips the draught
 Alone can cure their fever : give me death.

POLUBIOS.

I am thy life's strict guardian ; I have lost
 All that I loved in thee, and what survives
 Is hard to cling to, as to tend a corpse
 Unfleshing in the sun ; yet since thou art
 Unburied, I will stay beside thee, keep
 The carrion-watch in faithfulness.

BELLEROPHON.

Oh, hush !

Blest are mine eyes that see thee not ; mine ears,
 If thou couldst blast them into lethargy,
 Were happy locked. Thou dost make fine their sense
 To irony's light footfall ; tread not so—
 Athênê blinded swiftly.

POLUBIOS.

Yet rejoice

Thou still hast open avenue to pain,
That the ear's seeing is not wholly dark.
All life now possible to thee is pain,
All ease that visits thee death's hebetude.
Be glad that thou art hurt ; Polubios
Will wound thee, long as thou canst feel the thrust ;
On thy dead flesh he will not waste his blows.
Thy writhing is a sign his ministry
May not relax. Freely resign thyself
To all that thou canst suffer.

BELLEROPHON.

I am blind,

Blind from the sea and sky, and that is much.
I know not how the clouds are rolling now
Above my head, nor how the sea is flushed
In this fresh hour of dawn ; but not to know
What sea-lights glimmer on the argent wings,
What delicate traversings of violet mist
Soften the clear keen twinkle of the dew
On their fine leafery, as from the crest
Of some sun-flooded pinnacle he springs,—
Not to see him, my Pêgasos—

POLUBIOS.

Thou seest

Him still ; the gods are merciful to leave
Such memories unerased.

BELLEROPHON.

They could not hurt
Erasing them—take thou a joyless thing
And torture it to numbness, it will ne'er
Know what the simplest child of Arkady
Suffers, if you but set him in the sun
'Mid the bright cornfields, with eyes banished thus,
An exile midmost of his lovely land.
Rapture alone can make man capable
Of any, more than bestial punishment.
But to enable me for this despair
They ravished me to heaven. Thou didst teach
Me love of them, and I abhor thee more,
And were this arm not impotent, not grasped
By hands that like an iron fetter bind
The rebel will within it, I would strive
To brand in thee, in thy rived flesh, the scars
That testify thy faithfulness to me.

POLUBIOS.

Waste not thy time in words ; thou art cut off
From deed, and idle threatening heaps thy shame.
Old men grow garrulous in honoured age ;
Thou hast no honour ; and of thy disgrace
Thy speech doth spread the slur ; yet take the fruit
Ripened by thine own folly. When I passed
Through Argos, Proitos mourned Anteia's death.
He found her pallid 'mid the strangling cords
Of her own marriage belt ; her maidens came,

Loosed her, and softly tended ; but she turned
Fiercely on Proitos : " Tell Bellerophôn
Of my divorce ; " and knotting round her neck
Firmer the snaky ligature, she died.

BELLEROPHÔN.

What ! they are darkened too, those azure eyes,
From sunbeams their sweet play-fellows, that now
Will let day wither, mourning their dear mate
Closed, and for me ? Anteia, thou hast made
Thyself my fellow-prisoner ; let me share,
My dauntless queen, the secrets of that dark
Thou enterest so royally. Alone
Thou com'st ; 'tis hard life's shackles to unloose
Ere one can be alone, hard thus to win
Fresh maidenhood and freedom. Thou art free
Of life, I of religion ;—oh, to feast,
To banquet on thy love ! that revelry
I have denied my heart ; its vineyard slopes
Lie sunken in deep snow ; thaw the false crust
And crimson the grape-clusters !

POLUBIOS.

I return

To bid Eurunomê untwine the wreaths
She gathered for pure temples, and forsake
The fountain of Peirênê, in whose depths
She will no longer see the clouds uncloze
And the bright pinion-flash of Pêgasos
Ere he descend to drink. Or, if he come,

Will find his heavenly wildness turned to fierce,
Uncertain savagery.

BELLEROPHÔN.

Be thou his groom
If he need roughness ; thou hast done thy worst
And canst not stir me from my settled hate
Of all thy hand hath meddled with, and thee.
Anteia's beauty thou hast little warped,
Being but stranger to her. Thou canst hurt
No more ; her pleading lips protect my sense
From thy words' poisoned arrows. I am loved
Better than life ; thou canst not rob that joy ;
Loved, till one clammers Charôn's boat to take
With me the noisome journey. She can guide
Thorough this mortal shadow-land. Begone,
Polubios—I need thee not.

POLUBIOS.

We leave
The dead to their own darkness.—I am gone.

SCENE VII.—*The Alëian Campus.* BELLEROPHÔN *is*
discovered wandering alone.

BELLEROPHÔN.

They are all gone from me—haply are gone
From the light too—the great Polubios
Whose voice for ever haunts me, the sweet child

He went to murder with his bitter word ;
And that which broke upon me, the rich face
Of my Anteia when he told her love,
Is strangely faded. Still for Pégasos
I feel a sick desire ; and for the gods
The faintness of long famine. They are far,
Forgetful, but my heart her votive rites
Cannot forget, and still for sacrifice
Prepares her victims by the godless shrine.
The unbeloved oft feel no dreariness,
The loveless are eternally forlorn.
I loved Athênê ; and I love no more.
I called her, but she answered not her name !
Would she were dead, that I might heap her pyre
With my own corpse and, consecrate in death,
Die blessedly ; I cannot die unowned.
He travels not who travels to no goal :
The chariot wheels glow for the palms, but cold
Would be their course if, till the drooping steed
Cut off their flashing vehemence and fell,
They must roll on unurged. The gods are dumb,
Dumb to me now, who have been wrathful, dire !
They scathed mine eyes, and the desire of sight
They left to maniac all my darkened soul ;
They have shut up my spirit in a tower
Pierceless as doomed Danăë's maidenhood
Till the bright drops broke through the brazen roof
With golden ransom ; but no tender siege
Of softest tempest with its starry shower
Thrills through the stubborn walls of my confine.

Amorous as that lone bride braiding with dream
 Of Zeus her dungeon chamber, I am sealed
 From hope, and inaccessible to God.
 My grief for Pégasos long hindered me
 From deeper grief; Athênê was not missed
 While I had power to curse her; but there came,
 When my great wrath had cursed itself to sleep,
 Strange under-longings for her cherishing,
 And sometimes feebly I would strive to build
 An altar to her, but I knew it vain,
 And on the tumbled stones vowed to Despair
 What life in me was left to consecrate.
 In mere despair though the slow-fading years,
 Weary athwart the Alëian plain,
 Chance-fed, chance-nurtured, I have idly roamed,
 Dumb wholly, save when sound of human feet
 Gave hope of one to guide me to the sea,
 Whose breath comes freshly to me, or I catch
 The snort of Pégasos in the wild cry
 Of hurlèd waters that confound my sense,
 Removing as I track the whitherward
 Of the storm-broken, pressing armament,
 And dying in the fall of far-off foam.
 Tearful I have entreated; but none care
 To lead me to the mighty marge, where I
 In the calm sunset might be set to wait
 Till the great waves should over-bury me.
 I look not now for any burial
 From man; it is enough if I am hid
 In the deep bowering waters from whose couch

Rose the Bird-Billow of my early dream.
 My Pégasos, bright to these blinded eyes,
 Who still in splendour that I cloud with tears
 Crossest my spirit's passes, when at eve
 The warm still air creeps to me from the sun ;
 Or who, when from sleep's lightsome dark I wake
 To feel above me the great world of stars
 And breathe the golden breezes, standest by
 Glorious as I beheld thee 'mid the vast
 Moon-sweeps of Tauros, sleeked by Cynthia's
 Own silvering hand :—well might she joy in thee,
 Spreading her aureate silver o'er thy plumes :
 Yet not for Cynthia didst thou draw the car,
 My sky-won Captive ; by Bellerophôn
 Thou wert bestrid ;—still am I seeking thee,
 Thou Falsest, Frailest, whom I cannot curse,
 Whom I shall die desiring. So may Death
 Lay me in bourne of thine own native land !

SCENE VIII.—EURUNOMÊ *by the fountain of Peirênê.*

POLUBIOS *approaches.*

EURUNOMÊ.

Tell me, great master, where is Pégasos?
 My tender roses have let fall their leaves
 And younger flowers unfolded, since he smiled
 For whom I wreathed them. I have watched all day
 For the least change or ruffle in the sky ;

BELLEROPHON.

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All hath been burning calm ; but thou art come
To thy lone child, and by Peirênê's brink
Soon will reluctant Pégasos be reined,
If thou, who art his rider's goal, wilt keep
Close by the gushing eddies. Let me hide
Deep in thy vesture, that thy hero first
May wear the chaplet of thy golden praise,
And after, my poor roses !

POLUBIOS.

I am come,
Eurunomê, from thy Bellerophôn ;
After long search I found him maniac, blind,
And, at his will, have left him guideless thus
To blunder to his death.

EURUNOMÊ.

Deserted him ?

POLUBIOS.

Yea, whom Athênê hath deserted, doomed.
Child, it is impious to compassionate
Those whom the gods befool : when Heaven makes
Man his derision, in the awful jest
If we can join not, we must shed no tears.
For high Olumpos grows reverberate
With divine raillery, but to return
With mighty volume the malignant scoff
Of some blaspheming, puny imbecile.
Yet innocently may'st thou weep to know

Thine own swan-feathered Pégasos will feel
No more thy fondling hand.

EURUNOMÊ.

Oh, nevermore

Let him draw near Peirênê's brink, if he
Hath left the bridling hand. Bellerophôn,
I could not stay thee ; now thou need'st a guide,
Fain would I fold thee in mine arms and lay
Low in the light of the dim underworld,
Where the cool ripples would allay the hurt
Of thy pained eyelids ; where the silver gales
Of the soothe water-winds alternately
Would lull thee and arouse. Polubios,
Or take me to Bellerophôn, or take
Such curse as I can summon from the depths
Big with swift doom.

POLUBIOS.

There are dread seas between

Thy streamy hamlet and the Lykian land ;
And but three fern-fronds canst thou traverse, ere
Thy feet ache for the silver sandy bed.
Poor child ! I oft have lured thee from thy stream
To solace me with thy sweet songs, and thou
Hast learnt how mortal maidens break their hearts,
And all love's ruin ! Poor, sweet, broken flower !
I should have kept thee from the storm, still fain
Would tend thee and uplift.

EURUNOMÊ (*plunging in Peirênê.*)

To other arms

I go :—there is a buried motherhood
 Deep at the sobbing heart of these bright springs ;
 There will I weep, there will I hide my tears,
 And dower Peirênê with my maiden woe
 To swell the torrent-anguish of her love
 Who has lost children— [She disappears.

POLUBIOS.

Gone, Eurunomê ?

For me no foster fatherhood, no hope
 Of guiding any through this evil world
 Who yet most surely know the way. Remain
 The dark Korinthian groves, the glowing strait,
 The thought of far Olumpus, crowned with gods.

SCENE IX.—*The Attian Field. Near the sea; the tide rising.* BELLEROPHÔN *is discovered lying in the sunset.*

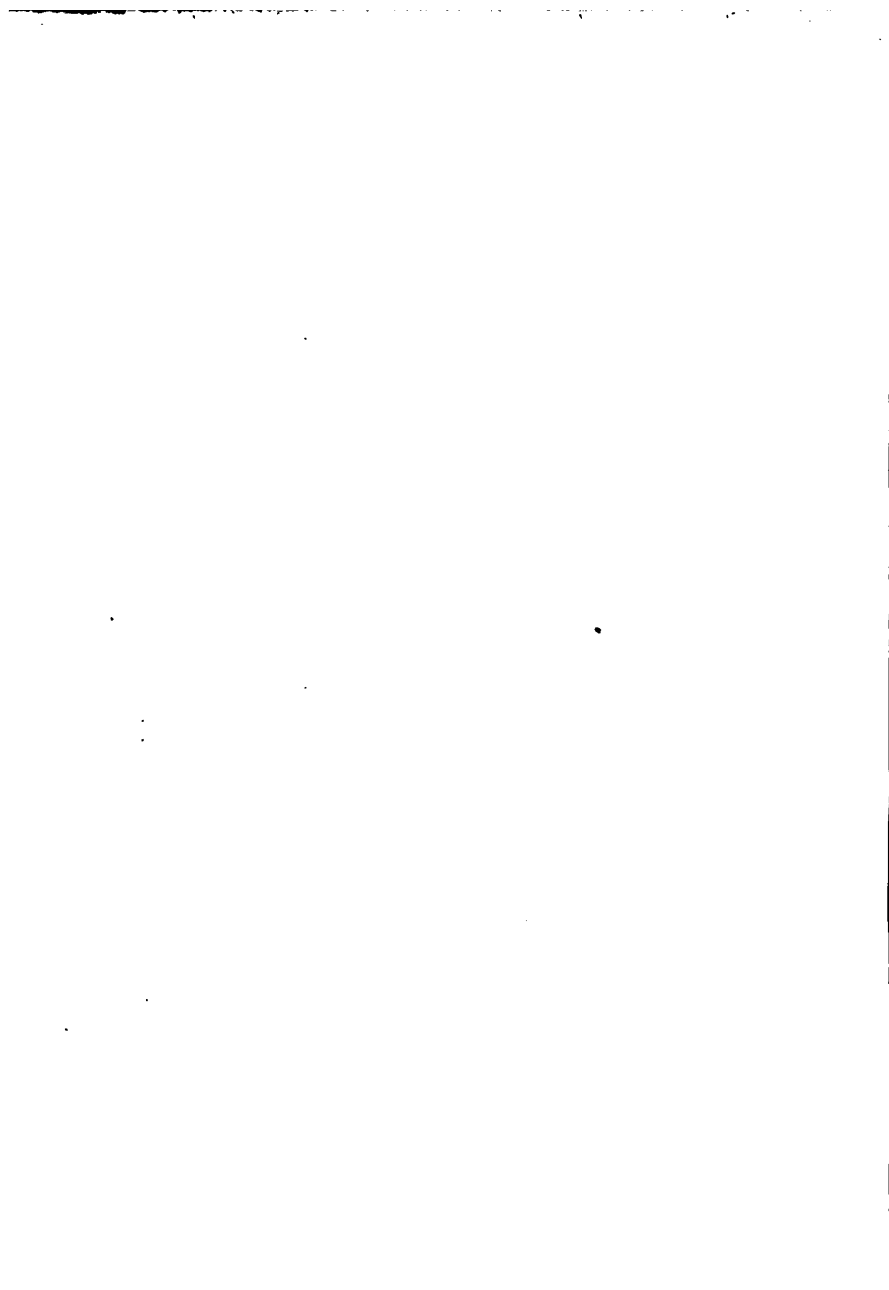
BELLEROPHÔN.

It is the purple sunset, and my pyre
 Is lighted in the clouds : night blows the cold
 Of death across the deep. I hear the waves
 Gathered from far horizons to the fall,
 As time's dim cumulating ages crest

The foamy tip of man's tumultuous life—
That billow breaking on oblivion,
That momentary sigh from the deep breast
Of a god browsing in immortal dream.
I hear the waves : wide vistas to mine ears
They open, and the solemn murmurous swell
Floors me a fresh infinity to tread.
The native land of my lost Pégasos
Havens my drifted soul ; the strong salt air,
Breath of his nostrils, half emboldens me
To dream that I bestride him. In mine hands
The broken rein ; broken, ye cursed gods !
How have ye balked my life ! What doth it bode,
This never-hampered liberty to die ?
Could man by Lêtnean waters be washed clean
Of the ingrained trouble ye have wrought
Into his nature, ye would guard the shores
From life's too eager fugitives. They lie
Open to all ; therefore I fear their depths
Impregnate with strange virtue to provoke
Lapsed memories, and set finer faculty
To finer pain. A warder would not give
Key to each captive of the prison-gate ;
For sport, he would but let them loose themselves
To the steep side of a sure citadel,
Or to the under-darkness of a mine
Where the path stopped at threshold. Yet a peace
Comes o'er me as Heaven, wearied of my plagues,
Nor stayed to see me perish. They are gone,
The guardians of my life, and I must haste

To my swift grave, or my lone heart will ache
To love them and desire. The laurel leaves
Owe their divineness to Apollo's brow,
And burn to feel his fingers 'mid the boughs ;
But should he cease from plucking them, the bays
Would scorn immortal greenness, take the garb
Of the sere forest, and make haste to fall,
That, trodden underfoot, they might lose thought
Of the god's thrilling touch. So would I die,
Being forbid to love : have I not lost
Olumpos, Pêgasos ?—My unfilled arms
Plunge for embrace in wide oblivion.

[*The waters close over him.*]



POEMS.

ADÔNIS AND APHRODÎTÊ.*

I.

AH, Aphrodîtê, godlike was thy pride
When Arês crowned thee victor,—when the choice
Of Ida's shepherd let the apple glide
In thy fair hands curled cuplike,—when the voice
That shook Olumpos took a silver tone,
Fearful lest sudden tears should stain the face
It chided trembling ; and when Psuchê bowed
To thee her subject beauty and made moan,—
Meek to the peerless mother,—thou wert proud.

II.

Yea, and as goddess thou hast oft grown pale
With love's dread languishment. The kingly sire
Of Ilium's foster-hope, whom thou didst quail
With quivering lightning, wrought in thee the tire
Of stifled passion. Thou didst yearn for him
And many a rose-lipped mortal. Love's sweet sigh
That sorrow touches touched thee sorrowingly,
And the deep aureate hair grew golden dim,
The blue-flower eyes drooped sunless : maidens die
Of that which is a smile's death unto thee.

* See Titian's picture in the National Gallery.

III.

But never wert thou woman until now,
Suppliant, caressing, tremulous, and wild
At thine own impotence to win the brow
Of thy free hunter-boy, to thee, the child
That from the chase restrains.—Adônîs, haste
From the fair arms that belt thee ; for blue eyes,
Blue radiant eyes, sun-lifted tearfully,
And a white bosom ruffled, wilt thou waste
The glorious manhood maidens tendril-wise
Creep to as vines ;—for which she crept to thee?

IV.

But thou, Bright Grace, defied and spellless, torn
By mortal pangs, to inmost godhead slain
From quiver thou wert wont to fill, what scorn
Shall make a fair corpse of thy living pain,
And shroud it as for burial? Be bold
To hide the haughty shame that ages thee,
To close with tomblike lips the sobbing breath ;
Make marble the pale cheek ; imperially
Bear the dread sickness and the shuddering cold—
All those immortal limbs can learn of death.

THE SONG OF APHRODÎTÊ.

I.

IN his first bright slumber I paused beside him,
My bosom heaved over him in his sleep,
And longing to kiss him, to clasp and keep,
I said in my pride, " Let the dark queen hide him,
Let her keep him safe from the heart he will slay."
But still in my bosom the sweet child lay ;
I felt my glad arms round his warm limbs close
In sleep that to happy dream entices ;
And his breath came sweet as the clove-pink spices
To the languorous rose.

II.

To the dark Queen of Hades repentant I hasted ;
The boy was rained o'er by her fast-raining tears ;
His rich beauty lay, a dropt flower from the years
Of her girlhood amid the gay fields, ere she wasted
In the dark world Aidōneus swayed. " As the bloom
Of the bright poppiéd path where I found my dread doom
Glowes the radiant child thou hast bidden me nurse.
I am motherless now, and he makes me a mother ;
Oh, take, if you take him from me, to another
Persephonê's curse."

III.

I sought the Great Father ; his suppliant ever
He listens benignant, benignantly calms,
And I bade him unprison the boy from the arms
That held him in darkness : " Adônis will never
Be thine, save in passion of joy half-possess :
Four months in the mid underworld must he rest ;
Four months, if it list him, his golden-tressed hair
Shall lie on the pillow thy heart-throb makes heaving ;
Four months he shall be the lone hunter, love-leaving
For wild forest lair."

IV.

As a pale flower filmed by the darkness that faded,
Looked the wan cheek, dead with the dead world's hush ;
But with summer of kisses I brought the blush ;
Then soft from the luminous roses I shaded
My o'er-dazzled eyes, he in turn would desire ;
And their sapphire-deep dream of the dropt lids require
With the tremulous claim of his lips' wooing breath,
Till I lifted them laughing, and bade him forsake me
For forest and freedom. He sware, " None shall take me
Save she who tends Death."

V.

Yet sometimes he broke from the gladness that girt him,
For he loved the wild chase, and I could not restrain,
Who trembled lest Artemis, angered, should hurt him.
Too cold for his beauty, too proud for my pain,

One shaft in her scorn she let loose ; and he swooned ;
I left the white lips, to drink deep of the wound,
Cold to cold, corpse to corpse, with my dead love to lie :
The doom with the deathless ones lonely to languish
Brought something like age to my heart ; but, oh anguish,
The gods love, nor die !

VI.

“ Dost thou cry for the bitter-sweet lot of a mortal,
Who heavest the heart-sigh with heavenly breath ?
Go, drink, thou divine one, the deep springs of death ;
Let thy broken desire faint by Hadès’ dark portal,”
So doomed the dread Father, “ and thou wilt learn all :—
Death is but a loss for renewal, a call
To a love beyond answer ; the broad sun doth set
The earth for a while of his bright beams bereaving,
Athwart the thick darkness, past cleft and past cleaving,
The dawn to beget.

VII.

“ A mourner can learn all that death has for telling ;
Through dark days of winter thy love shall lie dead,
Then wake with the May-breeze his bright queen to wed,
And, till the grapes’ purple and pomegranates’ swelling,
Shall love as they only can love who must part.
Be helpless, be hopeful ; the fluttering heart
The child of my thunder-bound brows may despise ;
To thee, by the tremulous lip, the eyes’ tender
Blue dimness of tears, I Love’s kingdom surrender,
A kingdom of sighs.

VIII.

“ The track of the cistus Adônis shall borrow,
When thine own lily blooms thou shalt see him return ;
Thy tears in anemone clusters shall burn,
The purple for passion, the pale for the sorrow.
The cyclamen fields shall be fair for his tread,
The daphne bloom fragrant to bower round his head ;
Watch wistful the curve of the crocus’ sheen gold
In aureate wreath round the mountain-snow creeping,
So round thine Adônis still white from death-sleeping
Thy bright arms shall fold.”

IX.

So I sing of him, sing of him, sigh for him, sicken,—
The swan at my passionate plaint leaves her nest ;
So I clasp my soft doves to my sore-craving breast,
And breathe on the dull myrtle-buds till they quicken,
For ’mid their white blossoms once more I am bride !
And, rich in love-pity, to ransom from pride
The bosom love sways not, the hero to arm,
As sad for my tarrying lover I linger,
For joy of his beauty, I weave with bright finger
The cestus of charm.

THE SONG OF HÊRÔ.

"Quid juvenis, magnum cui versat in ossibus ignem
Durus amor?"

Georgics, lib. iii. 258.

I.

I WAIT my love ; for me he travels this waste of water,
His love nor the dark, nor the sea, nor the sea-wind
bars ;

But to-night he swims fast through the golden stream,
The glittering path of the mid moonbeam ;
And limbs as white in their lustrous snow
As the snow-white limbs of fair Lêda's daughter,
Dyed deep in the current's girding glow,
Will leap from the waves as from tangled stars.

II.

I wait my lover in pride ; to them great glory was given,
Whom Zeus wooed in golden rain, or wrapped in his
flaming breath,
But Danăe shut in her brazen wall,
Or Semêlê scorched by the lightning's fall,

Ne'er dreamed a rapture, or dared a gain,
Like mine, when, the prisoning waters riven,
He drinks the kisses for which full fain
He faces death, and the rear of death.

III.

I wait my lover ; deep curves through the golden ripples
 he raises,
The moon glows clear on the marble,—Seléné's wake ;
On the sacred pathway why will he press,
That the chaste maid loves in her loneliness ?
The ocean, hid in forest of night,
Secure for her feet as the woodland mazes
She dreamed, and made, for her own delight,
Sweet tracks that no lover should dare to take.

IV.

And yet with glimpse of Leïandros the vision may smite
 her
Of one she slew with her shaft on the ocean verge.
She loved bright Orïon, she loved his song,
As the lonely and silent love, with strong
Life-shattering passion ; his sister's fall
Roused the Delian's wrath : let her aim aright her
Keen shaft where the sea was flawed ; then call
The bard she had buried beneath the surge.

V.

And yet did the fair huntress fall, or but alter in fashion,
When her pierced breast taught her the pain of her
 quiver's dart ?

Can she guard the flock, or the maiden throng
Who through youth immortal hath ne'er been young?
Nay, pure through noble pain she can heal,
Cleansed from lifeless pride by a sacred passion ;
Grand foster-mother of human weal,
She girds, and chastens, and curbs the heart !

VI.

But pure to her height, my lover, what hero so perfect
hearted ?
Lo, a king left his sweet girl-guide to wake to her death,
And a prince for a little while found bliss,
Ere he craved the false bride, in Oinônê's kiss.
But the dye of thy faith prints deep the years
Of enrounding time ; thy cheek since we parted
Hath been touched alone by impatient tears,
And only glows with my greeting breath.

VII.

The gods have stooped to be mortal for love of a mortal
maiden,
But godlike thou in thy manhood, majestic in might ;
By no fragrant curls, by no flashing sign,
Couldst thou grow to my spirit more divine :
For thee there is neither death, nor doom,
For thy heart with the life of love is laden ;
From the deep, from the darkness, a double tomb,
I take thee to worship, and warmth, and light.

VIII.

My great queen guards thee, full fond is her thought of
the quivering water,
That rounded her bosom, that dimpled for sweet desire
The eddies in cheek and chin, with dip
Of steadier curve for the subtle lip
And drooping lids ; clear the cradle bays,
And the paths through which to her longing daughter
She leads Leiandros, that lover's praise
May flush her pure altar with flowers and fire.

THE HALCYONS.

“ And birds of calm sat brooding o’er the charmed wave.”

I.

THE storm-wind has heaped cruel snow on the breaker,
That sweeps in dread folds the white dead to the shore ;
The hoar sea-blast no longer can wake her,
Who waited the dead she waits no more.—
A reflux wave round her bosom whitened,
A wave from the sea brought his cold corpse back ;
With meeting of love bitter death-waves have brightened
Their wild track.

II.

Dead love to love ;—they may not be parted,
The chill, pressing waves have no power to part ;
And even the whirlwind, careless-hearted,
Feels, as it passes, the throb of a heart.
Death with a ring of wild surf has wed them ;
Dead lips to lips they have kissed in Death’s sleep ;
The scattered foam-flowers and the billows that shed them
Fade and weep.

III.

The deep cold sky is rayed with the dawning ;
The stars unchain their orbs from the night ;
Like a dark flower fading, unloved of morning,
The darkness scatters its leaves in the light.
And white day broods on the white of ocean,
As the sea-bird broods on the ocean-breast,
And the winds lay the waves with a lulling motion
To their rest.

IV.

Autumn stays her hands in their woodland reaving,
The cornlands stir not one brown-ripe stem ;
While sleep's pale hand, still-fingered, is weaving
In the day's loose hair, night's anadem.
Her eyes take its rippling life from the river,
Her hand stills the plains of the heaving grass ;
Through the air's deep calm the slight sunbeam-quiver
Dare not pass.

V.

Sleep lays her touch on the curling billow,
And smooths down its curves to a cradle-bed ;
The love that sought love on the ocean-pillow
Can know no death, though white as the dead.
—Two fair birds rock on the waves together,
As close as the rocking blue can bring ;
And the waters lift not one soft light feather
From their wing.

VI.

They sprang from their sad cold death, with the spring-
ing

Of pale sweet dawn from the chill fair foam ;
And the sea round their strange new life is clinging,—
The ocean must be their new love's home.
And in winter the waves to rest are charmed,
The halycon's brood is their bosom's care ;
While the wind and tempest by sleep are calmed
Everywhere.

THE SONG OF THE HÊLIADAI.

I.

THE sun's mighty horses are idle,
Fire-nostrilled and lightning-maned ;
They champ for the mastering bridle
By which their fierce beauty is reined,
And their splendid power to a god's power chained—
Weep with me, daughters of Hêlios !

II.

Their great golden wings are beaten
Against the prisoning walls,
And their fiery food is uneaten
In the cloud-scooped laden stalls ;
Round their bright chafed feet scorn-trampled it falls.—
Weep with me, daughters of Hêlios !

III.

From their nostrils red streaks are beaming,
Meteor-like and intense,
While their lustrous flanks are gleaming,
And they pant with breathings dense
For the blue steep wastelands free of fence.—
Weep with me, daughters of Hêlios !

IV.

Burnished hoofs, fire-edged, ears uplifted,
They hear the chariot's sound ;
The chariot, like oak-leaves drifted,
Is fulvid ;—when they are bound
With blood-gold darkness it shades the ground !—
Weep with me, daughters of Hélios !

V.

Wherefore tremble the haughty creatures,
And roll their blue eye-balls wild ?
They see not the god's ruling features,
But his lovely mortal child,
Crownless, uncurbing, by pride beguiled.—
Weep with me, daughters of Hélios !

VI.

To the turmoil of wheels echoes waken,
Sanguine glow the sky-tracts clear,
For the slight hand the reins hath taken,
And the restive chargers rear ;
Their heads feel the strain of human fear.—
Weep with me, daughters of Hélios !

VII.

Then the deathless coursers fly, crashing
The clouds on their ruinous way,
Through hail and rent tempest dashing ;
The heaven itself is their prey.—
Oh, dreadful, doomful, pitiless day !
Weep with me, daughters of Hélios !

VIII.

The sky is lashed by their scathing fire,
The mountains are molten heaps,
Thé land is one blackened funeral pyre,
The wind as the typhoon sweeps;
Yet the struggling form its wild grasp keeps.—
Weep with me, daughters of Hêlios !

IX.

Then the pressed purple cloud is riven
By the lightning's archery ;
The bolt towards the boy is driven,
He falls ; and the steeds are free
Through the stroke of Immortality !—
Weep with me, daughters of Hêlios !

X.

He falls, and the great-breasted ocean
Whelms his scorched limbs 'neath the wave,
And softly, with mother-like motion,
She heaps with white foam his grave :
No prayer can win him, no pleading save.—
Weep with me, daughters of Hêlios !

XI.

Though he failed in his high endeavour,
He thought great thoughts, and his name
Shall nor die, nor be buried ever,
Nor blasted by scornful blame ;
A god alone could the sun-steeds tame.—
Sing with me, daughters of Hêlios !

ERÔS AND PSUCHÊ.

I.

THE WONDER.

HE comes to me—a bliss without a name.
Like a blind flower in the bright sun I bask
Till the warm mystery fills my inmost frame.

Till I am mirrored sunlight, and the mask
Of this fair body for a while doth seem
Mastered by some diviner self. To ask

For open vision of the heavenly dream,
For sight of this wild gladness at my heart,
For glory of the eyes whose violet beam

Burns in my soul's hid treasures, were to part
From secrets that are gifts. Oh, had I missed
The darksome wonder, had I dared to start,

When, trembling, from the rubied lips that kissed,
I learnt the glowing eyes' deep amethyst !

But mine I hid, of the great flame afraid
That breathed on me, as of the lightning's fire,
When its keen radiance round my bosom played.

Sweeter that moment of illumed desire,
That broidered darkness, that love-limnèd guess,
Than were thy brow's clear majesty to tire

My memory with its fixèd loveliness.
Now the winged Iris in her transient grace
Gives me the fleeting image to express

The aye-illuding charm, the godlike face,
Dimly divined through dreams that grow more fair ;
While down of dovelike plumes meseems I trace

When my arms ply with amorous touch the air
For the rich freight that darkling it will bear.

II.

THE UNREST.

Sweet, I must see thee, for the dream doth fade,
My morning dream of thy lost loveliness,
When in mine arms thy living beauty laid,

Pricks my keen sense more passionate to guess
How glows the jewel sheathing night doth hide.—
Are the curls gold my wandering fingers press ?

Do the smiles break in dimples when I chide
Caressingly, and with soft touch entreat ?
Thou hast enriched me with thy voice to guide

My spirit to the gaze, divinely sweet,
Where Love's mute lyre makes music.—Pityingly,
Dreading a rapture for my soul unmeet,

Dost thou the bliss of thy great boon deny ?
Nay, I must gaze in worship, or I die !

III.

THE WATCHING.

I stand beside thee, tremblingly upborne
The lamp that pales before thy lustrous brow,
Like moonbeams blanching in the fervid morn.

Nay, thine own beauty as in awe doth bow,
Quelled by the majesty of slumbering might
Sovereign within thee. Shouldst thou waken now

Thou wouldst not need to slay me ; for the light
Of those consuming eyes would be my doom ;
Yet my hot tears, down-raining for delight

Of thee, thy perfect body, bowered in bloom
Of the closed pinion's tender coverlet,
Will surely stir thee.—O my heart, make room

For great desires ! He doth not chide thee yet ;
In its sweet guerdon thy vast sin forget.

Fairer than seemed Endymiôn in his sleep,
When Cynthia through his slumbers shot desire,
Thou seemest ; her sweet state she could not keep,

Lured to her shepherd boy.—Love lights the pyre
Of pride, then leaps to heaven ; yea, at sight
Of simple girlhood, Erôs feels the fire

That frees him, captive to the prisoning white
Of Aphroditê's arms. Imperial child,—
Peerless among the immortals !—for delight

Didst thou seek Psuchê's bosom ? Could the wild
Young wings so close ? And have I cradled thee
Who art the great gods' conqueror ? Defiled

By the pure past's reproach, I wait to see
Thy trustful eyes wake to my treachery.

Not by thy mother's myrtle in the hair,
Not by the apple's scent, or lily's shine
Round opal temples, nor by wings that wear

Eôs' faint saffron tinct, do I divine
Thine awful majesty ; it brands its name
In my revealèd sin. I am not thine

But for thy vengeance, that my very shame
May give proud pleasure to thy wrath ; to feel
All thou wouldst have me suffer, bear the blame

Of lips, whose hurt no other praise can heal,
Is the one hope of my poor loyalty.
Torture me, and my patience shall reveal

How my dross-mingled gold is thine to try
Till the fire slake. I will not ask to die.

IV.

THE AWAKENING.

He stirred.—I stooped to kiss him as he lay,
To bid farewell, lest I should find him fled,
Hurled by a spurning ire, ere I could pray

That he would pour his anger on my head.
So stooping, dizzy with great love's restraint,
The lamp shook in my loosened hand, and shed

One drop on the bright shoulder. I grew faint
As the swift lids unfolded, and the clear
Sweet eyes looked straight at my soul's hidden taint,

Then slowly darkened ; yet I could not moan,
Awed by the still face, withering in the blast
Of a great hope's extinction. "Thou hast shown

"To me a woman's frailty, thou who hast
Strength for immortal spousals." So he passed.

V.

THE TRIAL.

If he had cursed me, I had lived to drink
Even to the dregs my bitter punishment ;
Being deserted merely, to the brink

Of the sweet river's cooling waves I went
To bathe my heavy eyes, and soothe the cheek
Fresh tears were ever staining. Then I leant

Over the rippling stream, and let it streak
My drooping hair, and round my bosom close.
"If I should drown myself, he would not seek

Even my corpse for burial." I uprose
And leapt in the mid current, proud to gain
The pitiless oblivion he chose

For my poor memory, in his god's disdain
Of the slight heart he coveted in vain.

But me the heaving water safely bore,
As some strong arm were pillow to my head ;
Nor loosed its chafing waves, till, on the shore,

As softly o'er the golden sand they spread,
The creeping ripples laid me ; and a dim
Gladness came o'er me that I was not dead,

Being still beloved. And from the river's brim
Meseemed I tracked a rugged path, until
It broke among the jutting crags that rim

The far-uplifted azure. I lay still,
Counting the steps to the lone summit gray
I felt my feet must traverse to fulfil

Love's bidding ; then I faced the stony way
As pardoned, being prompted to obey.

VI.

THE DREAM.

On the chill mountain-side I lay and wept ;
(Oh bitter in the dark to weep alone !)
And to escape my loneliness I slept.

Might I not dream the golden wings were thrown
Around me ? Not illusive was the thrill
Of hope ; he came to me, as erst, unknown,

A Presence, not a Vision. I lay still
And quieted my heart, lest it should crave,
Should beat in quick rebellion to the will

I would make wholly mine. "Thou must be slave
To Aphrodîtê ; till thy beauty flit,
Till thou art marred and humbled, from the wave

Thou must draw water for her. I have lit
The insufferable wrath with foolish fame
Of thy rare beauty, and she dreams thee smit

With pride of rivalry, now thou canst name
Erôs, thine hid delight. With daylight thou
Wilt scan her palace ; hie thee to thy shame ;

Suffer the scorn ineffable. Not now
Forbidden, to the scathing lustre bow."

VII.

THE BONDAGE.

I am her slave, and in the noontide heat
Must bear bright water from the spring that brims
Her shadeless fountains ; and the doom is sweet !

Still through my weariness the vision swims
Of that unutterable grace—the hair
That sweeps the massive glory of her limbs

Goldening their soft-veined marble ; cheeks that wear
Pink of the oleander, when it glows
Athwart the snows of Pindos ; and more fair

Than the white doves, that in its soft warmth close
Their wings and nestle, is the glancing breast
Where the Bright Child was pillowed, ere he chose

To kindle my girl-passion, and give rest
To the desire he quickened. Sweet, more blest

Is Psuchê, longing, desolate, denied,
And loving on simply in love's sweet name,
Than in her untried loyalty, her pride,

Self-thought, and restless wonder. With the same
Fond tendrils of desire my spirit clings
To thy unseen divineness ; yet no claims

Urges, craves no requital, simply flings
Herself in prone submission to the will
Her goal of worship. Proudest pleasure springs

From the mute trust that calls her to fulfil
Command inexplicable, suffer blight
Of labour, pain, and loneliness, and still

Find that the only task beyond her might
Were not to worship with a free delight.

VIII.

THE REDEMPTION.

Was it but yesterday that I drew near
The shadeless fount, then paused a little space
To pierce its sunlit depths? The well was clear,

And mirrored in its surface was the face
My tears remembered, with the smile that he
Ne'er gave me for remembrance. To embrace

That softened reflex I stooped tremblingly,
Kissing the stream, and ever downward drew
In awe of the Great Presence that must be

Guardian to that pale image. But he threw
Round me his wings' warm darkness, and in shade
Of those dove-feathered plumes, the voice I knew

Stole softly. "Sweet, thy tender trust hath made
Thee for my love immortal. I have prayed

"The inexorable Mother. She, who first
Urged me thy lovely maidenhood to wrong,
Finding me amorous of the thing she cursed,

"Closed her for-ever-parting lips, in strong
Purpose full vengeance on my head to wreak;
But I, immortal from her bosom, young

"And careless of her anger, sought the cheek
Of fresher flower than Hêbé's. Ah, how sweet
The child-like trust and wonder, and the weak

"Childish caprice how pitiful ! Unmeet
For my great love, I mourned thee as the dead
Are mourned ; then she I trembled to entreat

"Yet fled to, parted her proud lips, and said,
'Psuchê must be my bondmaid, ere she wed

"'The boy forgetful that he is my son.
Leave her to me, through toil and punishment
Slowly to teach her the dishonour done

"'Unto thy love, my beauty ; till, content
With harshest usage, she shall only ask
For thee in memories ; and in soul be bent

"'To serve my awful queenliness in task
The slave is born to.' Sweetest bondmaid, thou
Art free. Bright Aphrodîtê bids thee bask

"In love's mid blisses ; thou canst bear them now."
Slowly I felt the glorious wings divide ;
Faced the full smile, the lustres of the brow,

The amethystine fire ; then to his side
I sprang, his peer and his immortal bride.

APOLLO'S WRITTEN GRIEF.

" . . . The blue bells
Of Hyacinth tell Apollo's written grief."
Prometheus Unbound, Act ii. Scene 1.

I.

Is it what men call darkness that is heaving
On me its blinding surge? Darkness is lack
Of all I am,—how should I know its track,
Who leave it rearward as the swift keels cleaving
The sea-lands leave behind the severing mark?
Is it what men call death,—that deeper dark
Enwombing earth's frail offspring, that defies,
Faces, and thralls me? Are these tears that rain
Hot torturing dew upon a cheek from stain
As clear, as from the deluge-bearing skies
Scorched Afric's golden plain?

II.

Yea, they are tears, hot tears that love hath taught me,
Tears passionate as Cytherea's breath,
And I, like her, for dead love's sake, with Death
Will strive; the pale narcissus he hath brought me

Weave in a crown, and his fell kingdom claim ;
 And it shall be my wrong this bitter shame
 Wrought on the rosy sculpture of the gods
 Bright manhood's marbled limbs,—wrought on the face
 Olumpos matched not.—Thou fair fallen Grace,
 Say, what of thee amid the crumbling clods
 Still pines for my embrace ?

III.

Frail aureate opening flower, thou liest faded !
 Men dream that thou wert smitten by the glow
 Of my too perilous love, not by the blow
 Of him who rivalled me, and oft upbraided
 The fair boy only proud when I caressed ;
 My Hyakinthos of the ivory breast,
 Meet offering for the sun-god the white shrine
 Of thy young spirit panting for the light !
 My worshipper, my lover, not too bright
 Seemed I to thee ; thou sufferedst the divine,
 Daring the dread delight.

IV.

Can none recover thee ? Father of healing
 Was my wise child, and wellnigh conquered Fate,
 Till Zeus, in fear of hell depopulate,
 Murdered my boy, and bade me, ill concealing
 My rebel rage, in servitude fulfil
 Seven years, till I could bow me to the will
 Of him who watched stark Moira's weaving thread
 Awful, and trembled at man's impious hand :—

Yea, death must be, death and the shadow-land,
For mortals ; unassuagèd, by my dead,
I, an immortal, stand.

V.

More to me than my son, or bond-slave brother,
Great Heraklès, who as the swelling vine
Ripened to godhead ; meet for love divine !
Well was it I beheld thee and no other,
On thee heaven's mightiest had swooped in greed,
Thou lovely boy, thou bright-cheeked Ganymede,
Had he beheld thee ; but thou wert mine own,
Nor did thy young faith falter from its clear
And passionate devotion. Thy Great Seer
Sovereigned thy life, and thou didst need alone
That he should hold thee dear.

VI.

I have been with my worshippers, and often,
When with gay pieties the air was blithe,
With the sweet clustered girls, clear-voiced and lithe,
Mingling unseen, have felt my spirit soften :
When from their weary lips the paian fell,
The music of their motions kept the swell
And rhythmic rise of high choralic seas ;
And the soothed ear was of rich sound bereft
As rose of rose-leaves, when her heart is cleft
By gentlest gale ; and on the feathered breeze
The rosy scent is left.

VII.

Amid the gleaming, lovely group I lingered,
 Yearning to make the graces sybilline,
 Yearning in maiden stronghold to enshrine
 My deep prophetic life ; and deftly fingered
 Their fallen lutes ;—with Syrinx for his reed
 Pan breathed not more melodious pain, a need
 More piteous,—yet I found not one of these
 Whose spirit I could mould, a cup to fill
 With my majestic joys, or who could still
 Cravings that only utmost faith can ease,
 Of meek surrendered will.

VIII.

Woer of mortal girlhood, none would wed me,
 Yea, by a goddess I have been denied.
 Veiled Hestia, when I spake of love, replied
 By the great virgin oath ; frail Daphnê fled me ;
 The false Korônîs to avenging flame
 I gave ; her pyre waxed pale beside the shame
 Of her, my sacred godhead's sole desire,
 Who passioned me to bride her with the wild
 Fire of my burning lips ;—recreant, reviled,
 Mourned still in secret pulses of my lyre,
 Lost Ilium's museful child.

IX.

I saw her first, laid in my shrine for sleeping,
 The arched lids open in divinest dream,

With cheek swept by bright flushes, as the theme
Ruffled her pulses ! Subtle serpents creeping
Probed the ears' portals ; as their sapient guile
Traversed her spirit's inner haunts, a smile
Owned my gift's potency ; so strangely kissed
Procné's thrill-noted pang, the ecstasy
Of jubilant cicalas, even the sigh
Of tremulous low grasses she could list,
Silence' most dainty cry !

X.

So grew she wise through years of happy listening,
Still-lipped, and loving, and serenely gay,
And once again in womanhood she lay
Athwart my temple-steps ; the noon was glistening,
But like a flower she drank the light ; her vest
Left bare the pure young limbs, the brighter breast
Than my swans' plumes at sun-kiss, and the glow
Of the grand, restful arms—one drawn to serve
As pillow ; arching with superber swerve
One, backward flung, fell o'er the hair, and low
Drooped to the finger-curve.

XI.

My priestess ! not like Pythia when I tore her
With devastating blast, and left her dead,
Warm from my lips the breeze prophetic spread,
Warm from my wooing lips it stole to store her
With the wide world's futurity : she woke ;
Slowly the blue eyes opened, and there broke

'Thwart the great globing iris' thunder fire,
Immitigable splendours ! Quivering light
Leapt from the spirit's sluices, till its might
Swelled, like the gathering music of the lyre
To the full paian's height.

XII.

Meek as a mortal suppliant I besought her,
Gave her sweet vows, and made myself a child,
Lest the frail-fashioned girl should swoon 'neath wild
Ardours of burning godhead, and I brought her
To bow her burdened spirit to my will
In absolute surrender ; to fulfil
My bidding, as a wavering ship her helm.
On my restraining strength her heart she stayed :
A nation's doom on her young lips I laid ;
But I had given her soul too vast a realm,—
She trembled, disobeyed.

XIII.

Then how I mocked and mightily derided,
And vexed her ears with a world's maniac scorn,
Leaving her wise, prophetic, and forlorn,
Still to make plain the path and none be guided,
To warn her Ilium till its walls should ring
With groaning of the brazen horse, to cling
To cold Athênê, ravished from her feet
By impious Oileus ; then to satisfy

Atreides' lust, goad Klutaimnéstra, cry
On the foul stench of blood ; and last—oh, sweet !—
Sing her own dirge, and die.

XIV.

I as an athlete mightily have broken
All wrestling will, and given worse than blows
To all who traitored their high selves ; when rose
Orion from the wave, with lover's token
Flushing the white thoughts of high Artemis,
I swore the floating thing her shaft would miss
And roused her to unerring aim. Beneath
My feet I trampled all infirming power,
Sickness, and hampering pain ! Nurse-fed an hour
Childhood's soft swathes I burst, as from its sheath
Bursts the exultant flower !

XV.

If aught rose emulously fair I slew it ;
When Lêtô passioned that her twain should be
Peered with the clustered wealth of Niobê,
Straightway I swore the impious one should rue it
And bent my bow ; no arrow sped in vain !
With satiate wrath by the fair heap of slain
I paused ; they were a lovely wreath of dead ;—
Sweet-bosomed girls, and boys of snowy limb,
Still as the dawnlight, in the dawnlight dim,
While o'er their ruined forms her sorrow spread
As streams that overbrim.

XVI.

Did I not sway all heaven with my lyreing,
 And set high sunlight on the Father's brow?
 Harmonia smiled; Arès, forgetful how
 His white queen fondled him with love-desiring,
 Glowed in the mighty music; Hêrê's pride
 Flashed not from the great softened orbs; with wide
 Rose-lips child Hêbê listened; the clear eyes
 Of dread Athênê kept their dawn, then slow
 The plumed helm o'er the aegis drooped; and lo,
 Me, a mere Breath, a wanton boy defies,
 Dealing the guileful blow!

XVII.

Weak-armed and envious dare he so dissemble,
 Speeding my quoit with an impetuous breeze?
 Did I not use him serf-wise, over-seas
 To sweep, his swift subservient wings a-tremble,
 The men I plucked from Pylos to my shrine?
 Driven by his pressing plumes to be divine
 Priests peopled my Parnassian clefts, the bleat
 Rose of ungrazing flocks. This violet stain
 Dims a world's worship; and it were but vain,
 For my lost love, he was so mortal sweet,
 A god's fair life to gain.

XVIII.

Lost! and I lost him, I, Divine Defender
 Of my most sacred things, whose wrath one day

Persia's wide host in impotence shall lay
By my unguarded shrine. Priests shall surrender
My fame, give room for victory to be won
In the stilled laurels, 'neath the blazing sun,
My ungripped weapons on the temple-stair,
Within, the throne of Midas, Kroisos' bowl,
The glittering lion ; ere the thunder roll
Silence shall muster fearfully,—the air
Leashed to my vengeful soul.

XIX.

Then, as the ravening hand is stretched for gaining
Of my fair gifts, rises the sudden shock
Of winds, loosed forests, my rent Delphian rock
Dumbing the thunder-roar with chasm-straining,
Ere it can hurl its cloven crests as snow
On the pale host. No Persian bends his bow ;
But all as sacrificial sheep shall die
Quivering and quiet. Then an evening breeze
Shall clear the heavens and sway the laurel trees
To swell through murmuring grove the lyric cry
Of choral minstrelsies.

XX.

Nay, but mine ears are by the praise upbraided
Of Delphian throng faming my guardian might ;
For him I shielded not, my sole Delight,
His dimmed blue eyes groped piteous, ere they faded,
Found me, and flashed the memory-branding fire
Of wrathful love.—It was a holy ire !—

I kept him not ; and the sweet blooms that rise
 About my feet, bearing the purple dye
 Of his dropt blood, shall bear the charact'ry
 Of my vast woe ; and I will print my cries
 On the dark leaves—*Ala!â*

XXI.

And I for him, when the young earth doth cast her
 Frail flowers, low-drooping in the summer glow,
 Three days will consecrate to my great woe ;
 Yea, and for him, I, of men's lips the master,
 Will teach them the corpse-stiffness ; there shall come
 A day ungarlanded, unfeasting, dumb,
 On either side the feast's mid-day, the chief,
 When men shall think of death, that mighty wrong
 To youth, to sunshine, cithara, and song,
 And learn how the great sun-god in his grief
 Stooped the still shades among.

XXII.

Shall I not gain all soul-realm, sorrow-gaining?
 Full near to tears must lie the heart whose reach,
 Seer, sybil, sacred threnodist shall teach,
 Thrilling each Muse's trembling child and paining
 To speech, or mightening into prophecy,
 Or melting into love. Must I not die,
 Who heal, deliver, ransom, and appal?
 Me, Themis-nurtured, men must own in fear,
 Plague, and destruction ; yet feel ever near
 A god, whose lips have made the bitter call
 To one who cannot hear.

XXIII.

He hears not, he is gone, gone past returning,
Him on no brodered pasture I shall meet,
Yet the rich purple fragrances my feet
Of flowers that are his life blood. Ne'er did yearning
Of the deep heart die victorless.—The field
Dêmêtêr cursed, starving great Zeus to yield
To her own terms ;—the child, the gracious child,
For whom her breasts grew milky, proper food
For the maternal heart-fast. Her fell mood
Moved heaven, and Hadês of his bride beguiled
By the winged herald wooed.

XXIV.

Oh, bitter pain that all men cherish passes !
They chafe, nor the gods' kindly thought discern
Through transitory things to bring return.
With the fine green of the year's tender grasses
Hope comes, because they withered in the heat ;
But can he come again, my mortal-sweet,
To his immortal lover ? Lo, mine eyes
Have gotten tears for him, and through their gloom
Can see but dimly how the belled flowers bloom
Even where he faded :—a blue heaven lies
O'er my beloved's tomb.

XXV.

For ever and for ever are they token
Of Love immortal, wed to mortal woe ;

Lord of the lyre-strings, I have learnt to know
 In my god's breast, how human hearts are broken,
 And from unfathomable pain can feed
 Men's lips with eloquence, till every need,
 Passion, despair, its imaged voice shall gain ;
 Then will I compass them with dream, and teach
 That which will ravage inwardly, till speech,
 Passing through strong child-labour, shall attain
 To the prophetic reach.

XXVI.

And I will guide men's thoughts, and bid them stumble,
 Build the fair tower, with earthquake rent appal,
 Train the dull ear to music's ordered fall,
 Then awe with surge of chaos, and make humble,
 That men may learn to listen deep what breath
 May never utter. Consecrate to Death
 Is light, and life, and lyre, for thou didst die,
 O Hyakinthos, and thy sun-god doom !
 Apollo's children now must seek the tomb
 To do him service, and his dark *Alaî*,
 Sad the sweet spring-flowers' bloom.

XXVII.

Can the dark conquer thus? By the day's lifting
 Of cumbrous cloud ; the orient crystal clear,—
 By the lute's call that even the dead must hear
 And wander lifewards ; by the arrows, rifting
 The thunder-rocks of heaven, it cannot be !
 This hindering of the eyes, obscurity

Of dust that fades the rose-leaf flesh to gray,
Gives the chill odour, and the corpse-scent sweet,
Has yet his waiting conqueror to meet :
The aureate brow burns for the lustrous bay,
Blazoning dull Death's defeat.

XXVIII.

The coiled dark shall feel the unravelling splendour :—
Did not a quickened slime-bed's loathly den
Foul my Parnassian clefts, and ravin men,
Ere my loosed shaft, in impotent surrender
Laid him, the master-victim of my bow ?
The vile thing rotted in the scorching glow ;
And men breathed freely.—My beloved Land,
Land I have lorded with delivering might,
And compassed with divineness, as with light,
One foe remains. Your victor god shall stand
Fronting the great slain night.

THE WORKSHOP UNDER AETNA.

"Quotiens Cyclopum effervere in agros
Vidimus undantem ruptis fornacibus Aetnam,
Flammarumque globos liquefactaque volvere saxa !"

I.

THEY toil with their huge heaving shoulders,
As massive as rock-riven boulders ;
Like strings of the Mælian's harp
Their sinews are chorded : with sharp

II.

Wrench of iron their fingers are twisted ;
Each muscle in toil is enlisted,
And like rocks, flesh-knit, are their thighs.
The sound of the chain in their sighs

III.

Reveals them fierce captives unwilling,
Some strange, awful service fulfilling ;
Vulcanian labour divine
'Mid the mountain-roots of their mine.

IV.

Flames lurid or bronze-bright are lapping
The ambient dark, and are flapping
Against the stale, seasonless air,
Ensanguining night everywhere.

V.

Fierce, tawny forges roar lion-like,
Dull-sounding hammers the iron strike,
And beat the auriferous block,
Till earth shakes aghast at the shock ;

VI.

And pale man looks up to the mountain,
One luminous fire-spraying fountain ;
Feels the air grow pond'rous and still,
Sees the loos'ning vines on the hill.

VII.

Still labour those forms, rest forbidden,
In forge-stricken darkness deep hidden ;
Blood-brown in the rubicund glare
Glow limbs Ethiopic and bare,

VIII.

Their ruddy right hands, wide and wielding,
No instant to idleness yielding ;
A red sun their one-circled sight,
Their craggy brows seaming with light.

IX.

Their bent heads, gigantic and solemn,
Above the dun neck's rounded column
With locks heavy-capitalled,—locks
Aglow from the rutilant rocks.

X.

They are forging the Father's lightning,
With flame the dull metal brightening ;
And their sweat feeds as oil the blaze,
While the levin of wrath they raise,

XI.

Till the softened gold can be woven,
The shafts of the lightning cloven,
Fang'd with Death, and quivered for clasp
Of the god's omnipotent grasp.

* * * * *

XII.

Man too has a labour Titanic,
'Neath Aetnean crater volcanic ;
Foredoomed 'mid reverberate strife
To work for a bright higher life.

XIII.

The furnace of passion must heat it,
And blows of strong suffering beat it
To the form a god's hands require,
To mould of the Master's desire.

XIV.

This life which we hate, or we cherish,
Shall live, while in darkness we perish
'Neath the roots of the mountain mass,
Which that forged light alone may pass.

XV.

This Stygian dark seems so hollow ;
Our bright work we never may follow.
If we love, we go with it too ;
As the Titans their spirit threw

XVI.

To the lightning-shaft. Through surrender
Of strength rose the keen, puissant splendour,
Begot in the cramped, crippled form,
The fetterless life of the storm !

THE FLOWER-SUN.

I.

Look on me, my great god, look goldenly !
Let my fired maidenhood fold to a flower
With glittering disk where thy bent face can bower
A reflex of thy purple majesty
In the unmitigated heavens : I see
And passion to repeat thy perilous blaze
Athwart my sun-dusked cirque and dazzling rays
Of pointed petal ; in the swarthening heat
Of thy mid-orb that flaringly affrays
I bask, a brimming flower-sun at thy feet.

II.

Look on me, my great god, look goldenly !
Cool-leaved the roses' blushes : to the brink
Of my sun-seething cup I crave to drink
Thy flame of life ; no fruit so radiantly
Ripens in thy caress, though scarlet be
The pomegranate's sun-buried seeds, and grand
The gourd's globed glory ; none like me is tanned
To Ethiop dusk by thy continuous glare.
I am dark with thee, dreading not to stand
Blazoning thy beams, when the mid heaven is bare.

III.

Look on me, my great god, look goldenly !
Once, oh, how golden-gentle was thy face,
When thy right hand reined back thy steeds for grace
Of my half-lifted brow ; the other, free,
Thou didst bend over me, and tenderly
Didst round it cupwise to uplift my chin,
And clasp my cheeks my trembling mouth to win
For imprint of thy spirit-piercing kiss :
Then did thy mighty rule in me begin
Straitening to senseless loyalty my bliss.

IV.

Look on me, my great god, look goldenly
Though thou beat on me with a bitter scorn,
With strokes that if my frail rose-flesh were worn
Would blast it, I can bear thy cruelty,
Bear anything, so like Leucothoë
I lie not a corpse-exile from thy light :
My petals close not from thee for the night ;
Patient in starry solitude, in wide
Weariless golden watch, they wait the bright
Heave of the heavens in the morning-tide.

V.

Look on me, my great god, look goldenly
On thy clear-mirrored self : men think I pine,
Who mellow, burnish, revel in thy shine ;
While thou, sad Wooer, looking down must see
Thy white dead Bride, and water fragrantly

Her corpse with tears and drops of nectarous woe.
Ravish deserted Klútia with thy glow,
Turn thy dimmed gaze where thy Leucothoë lies ;
She was warm-breathing when they laid her low
In virginal close chamber from thine eyes.

VI.

Look on me, thou great god, look goldenly !
Oh, joy to think she feels thee not, nor sees !
I knew not they would bury her : to ease
My heart, where passion blazed funereally
Over dead rapture, " Shall Leucothoë be,
Father," I urged, " by Phoibos' love beguiled ? "
Then fled from memory of the tender child
As I last saw her shrinking from thy kiss
In a soft timorous bashfulness : they piled
Rough earth on that young cheek, nor wrought amiss !

VII.

Look on me, my great god, look goldenly !
Blur not thy beams ; thou must not sport with death
Or touch the sweet dead creature with thy breath,
She may still pleasure thee—a balmy tree
Yield precious frankincense perpetually
As incense for thine altars : that fair doom
I envy not ; so only I may bloom
The image of the heaven's throbbing flower,
Drop thou sweet odours on Leucothoë's tomb
On Klútia thy consuming lustre shower.

ERÔS AND ANTERÔS.

ERÔS in pity smiled across the tears
Unloved Ianthê shed upon a breast
Their limpid dew in laving did not stain ;
And comforted the child with vow to wound
With his keen arrow the unriven heart
Of Glaukos, who had robbed her of the grace
Of careless maidenhood—the cloudless hours
By fount, by distaff, 'mid the busy troop
Of washers by the stream, or gayer throng
Of those who wrought the peplos for their own
Athênê, and bore joyous to her shrine :
The youth should feel how love doth inly hurt ;
Ianthê's woes be lightened. By the god's
Own darts was message brought of her desire
And love-consuming languishment for him
Who ne'er had wooed her : he, implacable,
Took her love coldly as the gods take gifts
Of fore-rejected suppliants ; and the girl,
Flushed with love-gendered hate and agony
Of infamous refusal, turned to him
Whom Erebos by Nux had gotten, blind,
Dull-winged, a bearer of the leaden dart,

And torch that spread the smouldering fire of hate
'Mid those who had despised the clean hearth-flame
Of Hestia, or on Aphrodîtê's son
Heaped the insufferable scorn. "Avenge
Me of my wrongs ; bring from thine own dark land
All ills that thou canst summon : let him feel
From love is bitterer banishment than light.
Make his life upper Hadês : as the thirst
Of ghostly lips for the forbidden blood
That shall give pulse and passion, be his need
Of the bright joys that impious he hath scorned.
So will I give thee honour, Anterôs,
Scorning thy brother's impotence." He heard
Who couched in Erebos, and summoned all
The ills of that dark kingdom to his aid :
But the proud heart, unconquerably cold,
Could not be moved ; more stubborn to resist
Hatred's mad fury than essay of love.
Ianthê rested unavenged. One day
Flashed bright upon her the effulgent god
Whose perfect puissance she had dared to doubt
Since Glaukos still was pitiless. A kiss
His mother gave him from the pouted lips
Warmer to wake Adônîs ; and serene
In lustrous loveliness he passed to her
Who thought him vanquished. "I alone can harm,
Thou faithless, thou mistrusting maiden ; see,
With smiling face I go to thy revenge ;
It shall be mortal." Glaukos spied the boy
And to his cold cheek rushed the glow : "Of me,

Stung by thy sole defeat, audacious Love,
Dost thou make double trial ; I am proof.
Though thy keen dart hath scarred Zeus' ivory breast,
And drawn from Hêrê's bosom other pain
Than angered her when Heraklê's too hard
Pressed for the milky sweets, and being loosed
Let fall the drops brimming his baby lips
On heaven's floor, a lovely lacteate stream !"
" Rubied with clearest ichor, Erôs' shaft
Will never dip in dye of Glaukos' blood."
So boasted the vain-glorious boy, and urged
His heart to strong contention, emulous
To gain a second victory o'er one
Whose terrors shook Olumpos : but unmoved
Erôs passed by him in a bright disdain,
And of the god's indifference he died.

"WHEN THE ROSES WERE ALL WHITE."

I.

ONCE, his feet amid the roses,
When the roses were all white,
Erôs wreathed the faint wan posies
Round Zeus' goblet ; but, ere sipping,
'Mid the buds his ankle tripping,
Lavished half the vintage bright
On the roses, that, fresh-dripping,
Flushed the cup for heaven's lipping ;
And the god's eyes felt delight
That the roses were not white.

II.

But the sweetest of the roses,
By that fiery rain unfed,
Coily still her bosom closes,
Still the crimson vesture misses ;
Pale 'mid all the purple this is ;
Love, thy burning wine-drops shed !
When her blushes make my blisses,
Glowing answers to my kisses,
In thy triumph be it said
That the roses are all red.

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